

DON'T WORRY BE HEALTHY

A Buddhist Guide for Health & Healing

VOLUME 3

Compiled by

Dr. PHANG CHENG KAR



DON'T WORRY BE HEALTHY

A Buddhist Guide for Health & Healing

Book cover:

"BUDDHA CARES FOR THE SICK"

(Mural at Da Lin Tzu Chi Hospital)

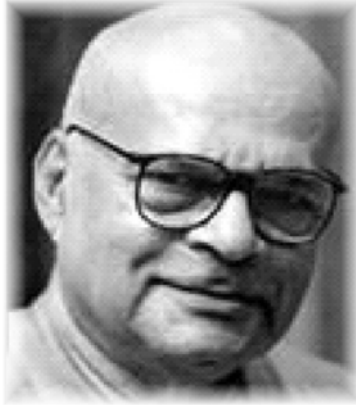
Painted by Li Chien-yi

Courtesy of Tzu Chi Foundation

VOLUME 3

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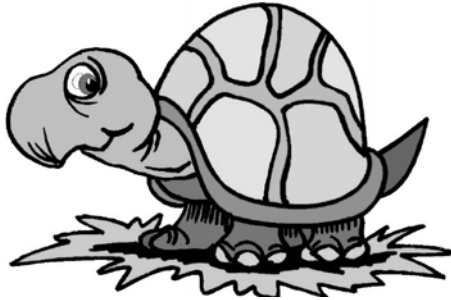
Dr. PHANG CHENG KAR (MD)



This book is dedicated to
Venerable Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda Maha
Nayaka Thero on his 86th birthday
on March 18, 2005

May he continue to be
well, happy, healthy
and live long to propagate
the sublime Dharma for the
happiness of all sentient beings!

CAUTION!



The subject matter covered in this book is general and not prescriptive in nature.

It should NOT be used as substitute to actual medical care and consultation for specific illness. Early diagnosis, regular follow-ups with physician, compliance with treatment, regular exercise, well balanced diet, good social support and positive mental attitude are still the gold standards in healthcare. This book only serves to spiritually augment whatever medical treatment you are undergoing.



FOREWORD



Dr. Phang Cheng Kar's "Don't Worry, Be Healthy - A Buddhist Guide for Health & Healing" is an excellent combination of medical and dhamma knowledge in seeking a life of wellness & happiness. The good doctor has used his professional knowledge and experience as a medical doctor together with his understanding of the Buddha Dhamma to write a guide for health and healing.

Mind Body medicine is becoming an important field of medical study in the modern world although the Buddha over 2,500 years ago had taught the power of the mind over our life. Western medicine has been treating man's diseases by concentrating on the body, treating the effect but not the cause. Thus depending on continuous use of drugs to treat one's illness. This might be good for the pharmaceutical business but not for the patients who might have to suffer the side effects of the long term use of these drugs.

It is much better to treat the cause itself thus relieving one self on the dependence of drugs. The best medicine is to practice mental cultivation and appropriate use of drugs in treating one's illnesses. This guide will be helpful in preventing and even

healing many common medical problems faced by modern man like pain, addiction, stress, anxiety and depression. There are also important topics on healthy eating, caring for the sick, past life regression therapy and how to face death.

Congratulations to Dr. Phang Cheng Kar for this excellent contribution towards the field of Buddhist Education by focusing on achieving wellness through Buddhist Practice.

Thanks to the sponsors who have supported the printing of this book.

May You All Be Well & Happy.

Ven. B. Saranankara Thero,
Chief High Priest,
Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple,
Sentul, Kuala Lumpur.

31st March 2005



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



I would like to state on record here that in the compilation of this book, I have taken some graphics, portion of writing, quotations, stories and similes from many sources. I have tried my very best to seek permission and acknowledge the sources. If due acknowledgement has not been made, I sincerely regret the omission and apologise for the oversight. I hope this acknowledgement would serve as my sincere request for permission, in order that many will benefit from the compilation of this book that will be printed for free distribution.

I would like to especially thank the following people who have contributed to this book in various ways:

- SIS. SOW YENG
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- BRO. ROBERT YAP

&

- ALL PATIENTS & BUDDHIST FRIENDS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO MY EXPERIENCE AS A HOLISTIC PSYCHOSPIRITUAL MEDICAL DOCTOR



PREFACE



Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambuddhasa

As I'm writing this, I have just come back from Ipoh General Hospital ICU visiting my sister-in-law, a young and active Buddhist Tzu Chi member. She is four months pregnant and has just gone through a high risk emergency operation for her newly diagnosed brain tumour. In the visit, I'm delighted to see that many of the principles found in this book are put into action by her Buddhist friends and family members to support her recovery.

My interest in this area of Buddhist principles for health and healing started when I was given the opportunity to present a paper entitled, "Total Health Through Dharma" at the year 2000 Global Conference in Buddhism held in Singapore. Since then, I have been accumulating literature and experience pertaining to this topic. Whatever has been compiled into this book is no way exhaustive but it's good enough for a start, as a guide for anyone who is ignorant on what can be done from a Buddhist perspective during sickness.

When I wrote my first book, "Don't Worry, Be Happy - A medical student's motivation and inspirational

guide", I was actually preparing myself ahead for my career as a medical doctor. As for this second book, I'm also preparing myself but for a greater challenge in life - SICKNESS. I hope I'm able to live and grow from my sickness when it strikes. May you all find joy in reading this book and be blessed with good health, happiness and longevity.

Dr. Phang Cheng Kar (MD)

pckar@tm.net.my

20th February, 2005

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Thus have I understood the Buddha's
principle for health and healing that I would
like to share with all of you...

Chapter 9



DEATH & DYING

THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF THE DYING - A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE



Compiled by: Ven. Pende Hawter

Introduction

In discussing the spiritual needs of the dying from the Buddhist perspective, we firstly need to look at several key points, namely:

- *Gaining an understanding of the shortness and preciousness of life.*
- *Considering what can help ourselves and others at the same time of death.*
- *Considering what goes on after death.*
- *The Buddhist concept of mind.*

Reflections on death

In order to gain an understanding of the shortness and preciousness of life and how to make it Meaningful, we need to reflect on the fact that death is certain and that the time of death is uncertain.

These points may seem obvious but we rarely stop to consider the truth of them.

For example, when we consider that death is certain we can reflect on several points:



- 1) There is no possible way to escape death (nobody ever has),*
- 2) Life has a definite, inflexible limit and each moment brings us closer to the end of this life, and*
- 3) Death comes in a moment and it's time is unexpected (and even while alive we devote very little of our life to spiritual practice).*

When reflecting on the fact that the time of death is uncertain we can analyse this further by recognising that:

- 1) The duration of our lifespan is uncertain - young people can die before old people, the healthy before the sick, etc.*
- 2) There are many causes and circumstances that lead to death but few that favour the sustenance of life - in fact even the things that sustain life and make it comfortable can kill us e.g. food, our house, our car.*

3) The weakness and fragility of our body contributes to life's uncertainty - our body can be easily destroyed by disease or accident.

Reflecting on these points can help us to realise that life is short and precious and that there is no time to lose. It is good to remind ourselves of these points each day. It can be very helpful when first getting up each day to say to ourselves "TODAY MAY BE THE LAST DAY OF MY LIFE, LET ME LIVE IT THEREFORE BY MAKING IT AS MEANINGFUL AS POSSIBLE, BEING OF BENEFIT TO OTHERS"

It can also be very helpful to consider how we would react if we were told, for example, that we only had 3 or 6 months to live, to ask ourselves questions like:

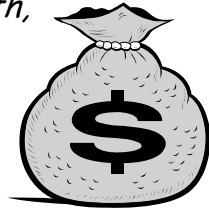
- *Am I ready to die?*
- *What unfinished business do I have?*
- *What do I want to do or achieve in the time I have left?*
- *Will my priorities change?*
- *What can help me at the time of death?*

**LIVE EACH DAY AS THOUGH IT IS
YOUR LAST AND ONE DAY YOU'LL BE RIGHT!**

The other critical point is to consider what will help us at the time of death. Reflection here reveals that:

1) *Worldly possessions such as wealth, position or money can't help us.*

2) *Relatives and friends can neither prevent death nor go with us.*



3) *Even our own precious body is of no help to us and we have to leave it behind.*

So ultimately the only thing that can help us is the state of our mind, the state of our mental or spiritual development.

Karma and the mind

How is this so? The Buddhist belief is that every action of body, speech and mind that we create lays down a subtle imprint in our mind which has the potential to ripen as future happiness or suffering, depending on whether the action was positive or negative. These imprints remain in the mind until they ripen or until they are purified or cleansed by spiritual practices. This process is known as the law of karma.

The mind itself is formless, shapeless, colourless, genderless, and has the ability to know or cognize all phenomena. Its basic nature is luminous and knowing. The mind also has different levels - gross, subtle, and very subtle. The very subtle mind is very clear and is usually only experienced at the time of death or during advanced meditation practices. The imprints of our actions (karmic imprints) are stored in the very subtle mind.



Death, intermediate state and rebirth

At the time of death, the body and mind go through a process of dissolution, where the 25 psycho-physical constituents that we are comprised of gradually absorb and lose their ability to function. This process of dissolution is associated with external and internal signs. This process continues even after the breathing ceases, for up to 3 days.

During this process the mind becomes more and more subtle and clear until it eventually reaches the point of the 'clear light of death', where it is said to be approximately 9 times more clear than in the normal waking state. At this point the mind separates from

the body, taking with it all of the subtle imprints from that life and previous ones.

This very subtle mind or consciousness and the very subtle wind upon which it rides then arises into an intermediate state (bardo) being which has a subtle (non-physical) body that can move through solid objects, travel anywhere just by thinking of that place, and so on. The intermediate state being stays in that state for up to 7 weeks, by which time a suitable place of rebirth is usually found. This place of rebirth is determined by the force of karma, whereby the intermediate state being dies and the consciousness is propelled without control towards the place of rebirth. The consciousness enters the fertilized egg at or near the moment of conception and the new life begins.

Crucial in this whole process is the state of mind at the time of death, because it is this that determines the situation a person will be reborn into.



If the mind is calm and peaceful and imbued with positive thoughts at the time of death, this will augur well for a happy rebirth. However, if the mind is in a state of anger or has strong desire or is fearful etc, this will predispose to an unhappy or lower type of rebirth.

The mind that arises at the time of death is usually the one that the person is most habituated to. People tend to die in character, although this is not always so. So in the Buddhist tradition it is emphasised strongly that the time to prepare for death is now, because if we develop and gain control over our mind now and create many positive causes we will have a calm and controlled mind at the time of death and be free of fear. In effect, our whole life is a preparation for death and it is said that the mark of a spiritual practitioner is to have no regrets at the time of death. As a friend of mine said recently on hearing about these concepts, "Perhaps it's time I started swotting for the finals!"

The Spiritual Needs of the Dying

When considering the spiritual needs of the dying, the basic principle is to do whatever you can do to help the person die with a calm and peaceful mind, with spiritual/positive thoughts uppermost. This is because it is believed that the state of mind at the time of death is vitally important and plays an important role in determining what will happen to the person after death.

So whether we are a doctor or nurse relieving pain and other distressing symptoms and reassuring the

family, a counselor helping to resolve emotional issues, a minister of religion offering spiritual counsel, or a volunteer who offers companionship and support for the dying person and their loved ones, we are all contributing significantly towards obtaining this calm and peaceful state of mind.

Within this basic principle, there are several ways we can categorise people which will help to determine the type of spiritual support that they need, namely:

Is the person conscious or unconscious?

- If conscious, you can do the practices with them or get them to do them.
- If unconscious, you have to do the practices for them.

Does the person have specific religious beliefs or not?

- If religious, remind them of their religious practices.
- If not religious, encourage them to have positive thoughts, or remind them of positive things they have done.

For a person with a spiritual faith it is beneficial to have spiritual objects around them e.g. an altar, a rosary, photos of their spiritual teacher, or to play spiritual music, or to burn incense, and so on - whatever reminds them of their spiritual practice. It is good also to talk to them about their spiritual practices, recite prayers with them and so forth. For an unconscious person it is said to be good to recite prayers, mantras etc. into their ear.



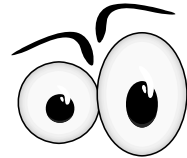
If a person does not have a spiritual faith, it is helpful to remind them of positive things they have done in their life, or of positive qualities such as love and compassion and kindness.

It is important to avoid religious activities that are inappropriate or unwanted by the dying person. Someone standing at the end of the bed reciting prayers may be an annoyance, and I have seen a case of an attempted deathbed salvation which greatly angered the dying person.

The basic aim is to avoid any objects or people that generate strong attachment or anger in the mind of the dying person. From the spiritual viewpoint it is desirable to avoid loud shows of emotion in the

presence of the dying person. We have to remind ourselves that the dying process is of great spiritual importance and we don't want to disturb the mind of the dying person, which is in an increasingly clear and subtle state. We have to do whatever we can to allow the person to die in a calm/happy/peaceful state of mind.

Meditations for sick and dying people



For those who have advanced illness but are still conscious there are a number of simple meditation techniques or visualizations that can be very helpful.

For those who are anxious or fearful of dying, teaching them relaxation or guiding them through a simple relaxation technique can be very beneficial. I will usually leave them a relaxation tape that they can use any time of day or night, whenever the need arises. When appropriate, touch, massage, reflexology and similar techniques can also be very soothing and stress-relieving, especially as the person may be somewhat starved of touch due to the fears and awkwardness of people who visit them.

A simple meditation technique that is very effective is awareness of the breath. The person becomes

aware of the movement of the breath inwards and outwards at the level of the nostrils, breathing naturally and easily, not forcing or exaggerating the breath. At the same time, any thoughts that arise are let go of, constantly bringing the mind back to the breath. This technique, although simple, can generate very calm states of mind and relieve anxiety.

When the awareness of breath is then combined with the recitation of certain words or mantras or prayer it becomes very powerful. Just to say "Let...go...let...go..." in time with the in and out breaths can be soothing and relaxing. A person with a spiritual belief can use a prayer or mantra with the breath. For example, one lady whom I was visiting who was an ex-Catholic nun chose the prayer "not mine, Lord, but thy will be done". She shortened this by reciting "Not my will" on the in-breath and "but yours" on the out-breath, repeating this over and over again.

The beauty of this technique is that 1) It can be done for short periods of time and requires little concentration, which is often reduced by the effects of disease and medication, 2) It helps to calm the mind and reduce anxiety, 3) It utilizes and strengthens the person's spiritual refuge, 4) It does not require anything other than the breath.

For both a religious and a non-religious person a white light 'healing' meditation can bring a lot of comfort and benefit. The person visualizes a brilliant ball of white light above their head, with the light streaming down through their bodies, removing sickness, pain, fear, anxiety and filling the body with blissful healing light energy. Depending on the person's belief system, they can see the light as being in the nature of Jesus, or Buddha or some other spiritual figure, or they can just visualize it as a source of universal healing energy. This meditation combines very well with the breath awareness technique and is also good to have on tape to leave with the person, to be used whenever needed day or night. When a person is close to death they can also be encouraged to let go into the light, into the heart of Jesus or Buddha seated above their head, whatever is appropriate for that person.

The use of guided imagery or gentle music can also be soothing and relaxing and help the person to have a calm and peaceful mind as they approach death. A person in pain can also be guided through a pain meditation, a technique whereby the pain is explored in detail, often leading to a reduction or eradication of the pain. A very profound meditative technique is to actually use the illness or pain as a way of developing compassion. For those who can use this technique the results can be very great. The person is

encouraged to think that "by me experiencing this cancer/AIDS/pain etc, may all other beings in the world be free of this, and may they have good health, happiness and long life". The person uses their sickness or pain as a way of opening their heart to others who are in a similar situation. People who have used this technique have often gone from being totally caught up in their own misery to a state of open-heartedness and peace.



An even more advanced technique is the meditation on "taking and giving on the breath" as described in the Tibetan Buddhist scriptures. In this meditation, one visualizes taking on the suffering of all other living beings (or this could be restricted to those with cancer or AIDS etc) in the form of black smoke, which is taken in on the in-breath. Then on the out-breath all of our health and happiness and all positive qualities are sent out to other living beings in the form of white light, and we visualize them receiving everything that they want. At our heart we visualize a black rock of selfishness, and as the black smoke is inhaled we visualize it hitting the black rock and smashing it completely, thus eradicating all trace of selfishness from our minds.

This meditation is a profound method for developing compassion quickly but there will only be a minority of patients who will be able to use this method. The usual way to progress in these meditations is to start with small problems such as a headache or tiredness etc, then gradually train our minds to transform bigger and bigger problems.

Conclusion

The aim of all these methods is to help the dying person die with a calm, happy and positive mind. Anything that we can do to achieve this will benefit the person, whether that be good nursing care and pain relief, massage, the presence of a loving family, or whatever. It is said that the best thing we can bring to a dying person is our own quiet and peaceful mind.



In this way we will help the dying person make the transition from this life to the next as smooth and as meaningful as possible, recognising the vital spiritual importance of this transition.

My wish is that this short paper may in some way be of benefit to those who read it and reflect on it, and hence to the sick or suffering people that you serve.

☺ DEATH ☺



Death is never far away
I've counted over 60
Whom I know or saw
And now I know for sure
They're no more
They seemed so alive
Just the other day
They talked, they laughed
And even cried
Now they're gone
To where who knows?

Death is just a thought away
My breath soon will stop too they say
But where will I go?
What will I be?
Who knows?

Beings have died
More will die
None escapes Death's jaws
Each year the number rise
No tears can wash away their deeds
Or turn the corpses in their graves
So let the past be dead
For life must go on
Mourning is not the way of the wise

- Venerable Sujiva -



Life is uncertain but death is certain!

THINGS TO BE DONE WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER IS CRITICALLY ILL

(A guide to proper Buddhist funeral
by Koperasi Buddhisme Malaysia Berhad)

1. Overcome our own fear and attachment. Be calm, peaceful and allow our family member to go.

2. The dying person too should be encouraged to accept death as a natural and inevitable phenomenon, and that all of us come according to our karma and have to go according to our karma.



3. He should constantly be encouraged to reflect on the good deeds that he has done, and be assured that these wholesome deeds of his will lead him to a good rebirth and support him in his life.

4. Family members may assure the dying person that he need not worry about them, that he should keep his mind calm and peaceful, and that it will be all right to go when his time comes.

5. Give donations and do other meritorious deeds in his name and share the merit with him. If possible,

get him personally involved in the meritorious act, or else he should be informed about it and should acknowledge it.

6. If the dying person has faith in the Buddhasasana, a small image of the Buddha, Kwan Yin or some of the bodhisatta which the sick person has faith in, may be placed strategically by his bedside as an object for contemplation (a constant reminder of the noble qualities the icons represent).

7. Chanting of appropriate parittas (protective verses) by either monks or laymen could be organised to comfort the dying person and his family members.

8. He should be encouraged to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Monks could be invited for breakfast or lunch dana and gifts in the form of requisites could be prepared for him to offer to the Sangha.

9. If the dying person has been practising meditation, remind him of the importance of mindfulness. Encourage him to constantly note the arising and falling of events e.g. thoughts, memories, emotions, visions and sensory perceptions.

10. Dhamma friends who are practitioners of meditation can be invited to radiate loving-kindness (metta) to the dying person to ease his suffering.

11. If a family member has little faith in the Buddhasasana or belongs to another religion, encourage him to have faith, to pray, to have positive thoughts, etc. in accordance with his religious beliefs and practices. Do not try to impose your own beliefs to convert him as this may give rise to confusion, disturbing emotions or negative thoughts in the mind of the dying.

12. If a family member had no religion, but seems to be open-minded, you can try to talk about the Dhamma, for example, about loving-kindness and compassion, about the truth of impermanence, about Four Noble Truths etc. You can try to talk about the Buddha, taking refuge in the Triple Gem, etc, but be sensitive, don't be aggressive, otherwise the person may react negatively.

13. If the person had no interest in religious or spiritual matters, find ways to talk to him so that he can be free from anger, attachment, fear, etc. and have a positive, peaceful state of mind.





LIFE NEVER DIES



-A Buddhist Funeral Song-

Life never dies although we live
In midst of change and death
Only the forms shall pass away
And not the spirits breath

The consciousness can never die
Although it seems to fade
It doth but pass to other forms
Which thoughts and acts have made

There is no death all nature cries
The rose will reappear
Its petal will more perfect be
After the winter drear

The tiny bird that lifeless falls
A victim to its prey
Returns again in higher forms
Upon its upward way

From life to life more high and free
The myriads forms evolve
O may we learn to know the truth
This mighty riddle solve



- Datuk Dr. Victor Wee -

LIFE IS UNCERTAIN DEATH IS CERTAIN

On one occasion, there was a young woman by the name Kisa Gotami whose infant son had died. Quite naturally, she was very attached to her baby and being overcome with grief, she walked around her village with the dead body, begging everyone to restore her son to life. Finally, she came to the Buddha who knew that in her distracted state, she was not ready to listen to an intellectual explanation on the nature of death. Instead, he wanted her to realize this truth for herself.

So, he said he would help her if she could bring a handful of mustard seeds from a person who had not lost a loved one. Kisa Gotami went from house to house but while people were happy to give her the mustard seed, everyone told that they had experienced the death of someone close to them during their lifetime. As the day wore on, Kisa Gotami was becoming tired, and her intense grief was abated. Her mind was now able to see that death is the common inheritance of anyone who is born. Her son, who had been born, had to die. Even if the Buddha had restored him to life, he would die eventually anyway. When she realized this, she began to understand that

all existence is meaningless. She buried her dead son, returned to the Buddha and became a nun and soon realized Ultimate Happiness.

BIRTHDAY INDICATION



BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY IS AN
INDICATION OF YOUR AGE.
YOU MUST WARN YOURSELF,
SAYING: "I AM ONE YEAR NEARER TO DEATH."
THOSE OF MY AGE AND THOSE YOUNGER & OLDER
THAN I AM HAVE BEEN DEAD.

-Ashin Janakabhivamsa-

LONGEVITY

How old do you want to live?



BETTER THAN A HUNDRED YEARS, IS ONE
DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PERSON WHO SEES
THE HIGHEST TRUTH

- Dhammapada -

CONTEMPLATION ON DEATH

(Buddha Puja: Cultivating the mind through devotion -
Compiled by Victor Wee)



I sit now before the Buddha and contemplate that He and all who knew Him are now dead. Since his great demise, countless beings have come, bided their time and gone. The names and deeds of but a few are remembered. Their many pains, their joys, their victories and defeats. Like themselves are now but shadows.

And so it will be with all whom I know. Passing time will turn into mere shadows the calamities I worry about, the possibilities I fear, and the pleasures I chase after. Therefore, I will contemplate the reality of my own death that I may understand what is of true value in life.

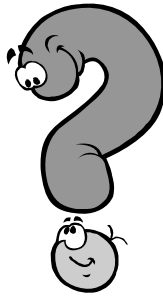
Because death may soon come, I will repay all debts, forgive all transgressions and be at odds with none. Because death may soon come, I will squander no time brooding on past mistakes but use each day as if it were my last. Because death may soon come, I will

purify my mind rather than pamper the body. Because death may soon come, and I will be separated from those I love, I will develop detached compassion rather than possessiveness and clinging.

Because death may soon come, I will use each day fully, not wasting it on fruitless pursuits and vain longings. May I be prepared when death finally comes. May I be fearless as life ebbs away. May my detachment help in the freeing of the heart.

THE LIFE SPAN OF A HUMAN BEING
IS ONLY AS LONG AS ONE BREATH -
WHEN YOU EXHALE BUT DON'T INHALE
YOU WILL BE DEAD

What am I going
told by my doctor
terminal cancer
for another 3
going to do the



to do now if I'm
that I have
and can only live
months? Am I
same thing

that I'm doing now? Is there a
better way of living?

CHANGING A RELIGIOUS LABEL BEFORE DEATH

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

Merely to believe that there is someone to wash away our sins without suppressing our evil state of mind, is not in accordance with the Teachings of the Buddha.

Very often we come across cases of people who change their religion at the last moment when they are about to die. By embracing another religion, some people are under the mistaken belief that they can 'wash away their sins' and gain an easy passage to heaven. They also hope to ensure themselves a more emotionally charged and aesthetically more attractive burial. For people who have been living a whole life time with a particular religion, to suddenly embrace a religion which is totally new and unfamiliar and to expect an immediate salvation through their new faith is indeed very far-fetched. This is only a dream. Some people are even known to have been converted into another faith when they are in a state of unconsciousness and in some cases, even posthumously. Those who are over zealous and crazy about converting others into their faith, have misled uneducated people into believing that theirs is the

one and only faith with an easy method or short-cut to heaven. If people are led to believe that there is someone sitting somewhere up there who can wash away all the sins committed during a lifetime, then this belief will only encourage others to commit evil without fear.

According to the Teachings of the Buddha there is no such belief that there is someone who can wash away sins. It is only when people sincerely realise that what they are doing is wrong and after having realised this, try to mend their ways and do good that they can suppress or counter the bad reactions that would accrue to them for the evil they had committed.



It has become a common sight in many hospitals to see purveyors of some religions hovering around the patients promising them 'life after death'. This is exploiting the basic ignorance and psychological fear of the patients. If they really want to help, then they must be able to work the 'miracles' they so proudly claim lies in their holy books. If they can work miracles, we will not need hospitals and cemeteries. Buddhists must never become victims to these people. They must learn the basic teachings of their noble religion which tell them that all suffering is the basic lot of mankind. The only way to end suffering is by purifying the mind. The individual creates his or her own suffering and it is that person alone who can end it. One cannot hope to eradicate the consequences of one's evil actions simply by changing one's religious label at the doorstep of death.

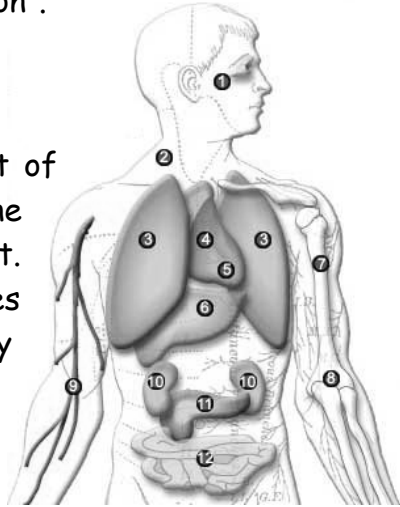
A dying person's destiny in the next life depends on the last thoughts which appear according to the good and bad karma accumulated during the current lifetime, irrespective of what type of religious label a person prefers to display at the last moment.

A GUIDE TO BUDDHISM & ORGAN DONATION

Adapted from a UK transplant brochure,
"Buddhism & Organ Donation".

What is organ donation?

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone else who needs a transplant. Hundreds of people's lives are saved each year by organ transplants. Organs that can be donated by people who have died include the heart, lungs,



kidneys, liver, pancreas and small bowel. Tissue such as skin, bone, heart valves and corneas can also be used to help others.

When can organ donation take place?

Doctors and nurses are committed to doing everything possible to save life. Organs are only removed for transplantation once all attempts to save

life have failed and after death has been certified by a doctor or doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Most donated organs come from people who die from a severe brain injury and who receive treatment on a ventilator in an intensive care unit. The brain injury damages vital centers in the brain stem which are essential to maintain life. No one can live once these centers have been destroyed. Tests can show conclusively when this has happened.

In some circumstances, patients who die in hospital but are not on a ventilator may also donate. They are called non-heart beating donors. Sometimes people who do not die in hospital can become tissue donors.

Consent?

The consent or lack of objection, of those closest to the patient is always sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important for people to discuss their wishes with their loved ones. Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know some good has come from their loss.

Care and respect?

The removal of organs is carried out with the greatest care and respect. The family can see the body afterwards and staff can contact a Buddhist monk or local religious leader if the family wishes.

Buddhism and organ donation?

Helping others is central to Buddhism along with the belief that charity forms an integral part of a spiritual way of life. There are examples in Buddhist scripture of the compassion shown by Buddha in giving his life and body to help others. The Sutra of Golden Light, chapter 18, shows how Buddha gave his body to save a starving tigress and her cubs, who were later reborn as his disciples. Human life, like everything else, is impermanent. It may be considered an act of compassion to enable another person to continue to live. For many Buddhists the most important consideration regarding death is the state of mind as this will influence the rebirth.

"ORGAN DONATION IS AN EXTREMELY POSITIVE ACTION. AS LONG AS IT IS TRULY THE WISH OF THE DYING PERSON, IT WILL NOT HARM IN ANY WAY THE CONSCIOUSNESS THAT

IS LEAVING THE BODY. ON THE CONTRARY, THIS FINAL ACT OF GENEROSITY ACCUMULATES GOOD KARMA."

-Sogyal Rinpoche, The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying-



There are many different Buddhist traditions and organ donation is an individual choice:

"I WOULD BE HAPPY IF I WAS ABLE TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE LIVE AFTER MY OWN DEATH."

-Dhammarati, Western Buddhist Order-



"NON-ATTACHMENT TO THE BODY CAN BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF NON-ATTACHMENT TO SELF AND BUDDHIST TEACHINGS ON IMPERMANENCE. COMPASSION IS A PRE-EMINENT QUALITY. GIVING ONE'S BODY FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS IS SEEN AS A VIRTUE."

-The Amida Trust-



SUPPORT ORGAN & TISSUE DONATION TO



"ORGAN DONATION IS ACCEPTABLE IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM. IT IS A BUDDHIST VIRTUE TO GENEROUSLY EXTEND HELP TO OTHER SENTIENT BEINGS AND THIS COVERS THE CASE OF ORGAN DONATION."

**-Phramaha Laow Panyasiri, Abbot, The
Buddhavihara Temple-**



"I ALWAYS CARRY MY DONOR CARD WITH ME"

-Paul Seto, Director, The Buddhist Society-



BUDDHIST ATTITUDE TOWARDS HUMAN ORGAN DONATIONS

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

From the Buddhist point of view, the donation of organs after one's death for the purpose of restoring the life of another human being clearly constitutes an act of charity which forms the basis or foundation of a spiritual or religious way of life.



Dana is the Pali term in Buddhism for charity or generosity. The perfection of this virtue consists of its practice in three ways, namely:

1. the giving or sharing of material things or worldly possessions
2. the offering of one's own bodily organs; and
3. the offering of one's services for a worthy cause to save the life even at the risk of sacrificing one's own life for the well being and happiness of others in need.

It is through such acts of charity that one is able to reduce one's own selfish motives from the mind and begin to develop and cultivate the great virtues of loving kindness, compassion and wisdom. The teaching of the Buddha is for the purpose of reducing suffering here and now, and to pave the way for the complete cessation of all forms of suffering. The fear to participate in a noble act such as that of organ donation lies primarily in a lack of understanding of the real nature of existence. There are some people who believe that when any part of their body or organ is removed, they will have to go without that organ in their next life or that they will not be eligible to enter the kingdom of heaven. There is no rational basis to such ideas.

From the Buddhist point of view, death takes place when one's consciousness leaves the disintegrating material body. And, it is that relinking of consciousness, which determines one's next life. Some religionists may call this relinking consciousness a "soul", while others may call it "spirit" or "mental energy". Whatever term is use, it is clear that it has nothing to do with material components of the body which subject are subject to—and which return to their respective sources of energy. The earth

element returns to the soil; the water element returns to the streams, and the heat and elements return to the atmosphere. No matter how well the body is preserved, whether in a metal or wooden coffin, decomposition of the body is inevitable. It is only the consciousness, which goes on to the new rebirth.

Instead of allowing the organ to rot away and go to waste, today's technology and surgical methods have enabled their component structures such as the heart and other organs to be used or transplanted to restore life. With the ever-increasing number of organ failure occurring in the country, the time has come for our more understanding members of the public to come forward and volunteer to donate their organs after their death for a worthy cause.

It is the duty of all understanding people to join in this noble cause to help to alleviate suffering of humanity. Some time ago there was a car sticker which said, "LEAVE YOUR ORGANS BEHIND, GOD KNOWS THAT WE NEED THEM HERE".



THE BODHISATTA'S LIFE DONATION

The following is a story from the Vyaghri Jataka that illustrates how the Buddha in his past lives willingly and joyfully sacrifices his life for the good and happiness of the others. Well, we might not be as super-compassionate and generous as the Buddha. But, we can at least partially follow His foot steps by donating our organs upon death.



On one occasion when the Bodhisatta (one who aspires to become a Buddha) was passing through a forest, accompanied by his disciples, he saw a tigress and her three cubs near death from starvation. Moved to compassion, he asked his disciples to secure some food for them. This was but a pretext to send them away, for the Bodhisatta thought:

“Why should I search after meat from the body of another while the whole of my own body is available? Finding other meat is a matter of chance, and I may well lose the opportunity of doing my duty. This body being foul and a source of suffering, he is not wise

who would not rejoice as its being spent for the benefit of another. There are but two things that make one disregard the grief of another; attachment to one's own pleasure and the absence of the power of helping. But, I cannot take my pleasure while another grieves, as I am able to help him. Why should I, therefore be indifferent?"

"By casting myself down this precipice, I sacrifice my miserable body which will feed the tigress, thus preventing her from killing the young ones and saving the young ones from dying by the teeth of their mother."

"Furthermore, by doing so, I set an example to those whose longings are for the good of the world. I encourage the feeble, I gladden those who understand the meaning of charity and I inspire the virtuous. And finally that opportunity I yearned for, when may I have the opportunity of benefiting others by offering them my own limbs, I shall obtain it now, and acquire before long the Samma Sambuddhahood, the Supreme Enlightenment."

Thinking thus, he cast himself down the precipice sacrificing his life for the welfare of those helpless beings.

STEP INTO THE GATE OF MEDICINE

-Translated by Jo Chen-

The following are excerpts from stories by students of the Tzu Chi College of Medicine. Their first experiences in the anatomy lab made them feel agitated, frustrated and appreciative. The body donors not only silently guided them into the mysteries of the human body, but showed them the impermanence of life and the beauty of death. This heart-touching moment may become one of their most precious, unforgettable memories.

DYING WITH DIGNITY

By Lai Kun-cheng,

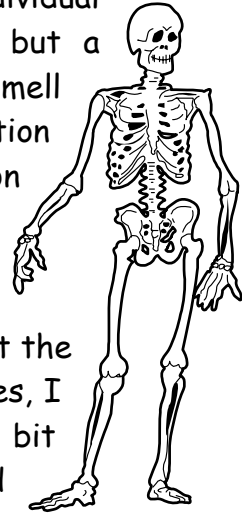
Anatomy Department Instructor



Knowing that I teach anatomy at the Tzu Chi College of Medicine, many friends ask me, "How many dead bodies have you done?" "Isn't it terrifying?" "Have you ever had some eerie experience?"

Generally speaking, normal people are scared of cadavers, not to mention the ghastly experience of cutting them up. I remember my first class in the

gross anatomy lab: I took a knife and carefully, respectfully dismembered the cadaver, which had the same body structures as mine. However, this respectful attitude didn't last long. Just a few weeks later, my teammates and I started to complain about this clumsy job and to tease the thick fat of the cadaver. To me, it was no longer an individual human that deserved our respect, but a learning tool. Moreover, the pungent smell of formalin and the sense of frustration at failing to find an organ as shown on the charts made me feel contempt for the body.



At the end of the semester, looking at the scattered organs and fat of the bodies, I asked myself if I had showed even a bit of respect for them, or if I would donate my own body for medical students to dissect into pieces. The answer was definitely negative. I expected to be treated like a human being even when I was dead, but I did not see that on the dissection table.

I admit that in the anatomy lab, I gained a lot of knowledge which could never be learned through studying textbooks. I also believed those body donors deserved our admiration. However, I just couldn't

convince myself to join them. I had very mixed emotions. Why? Because I felt it was something meaningful to donate our bodies for medical research, but on the other hand I thought it would be embarrassing to be dissected by students while lying naked on a table. (I bet lots of people out there feel the same way as I did.)

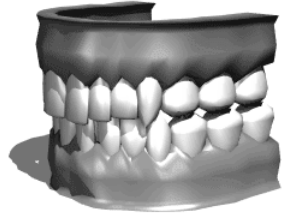
But since I joined Tzu Chi a year ago, I have changed. Inspired by Master Cheng Yen, who brought the Buddhist teachings to life, and influenced by the rich humanitarian spirit of Tzu Chi people, I got rid of my contradictory thoughts and now feel much more at ease. The Master says, "Our life is impermanent, but the life of wisdom is everlasting." Our life is fragile, indeed. We respect someone not because of how long he lives, but for how much he contributes to the world.

Those donors made use of their bodies to teach students something they could never learn from books. They won their dignity and respect. To me, it is the life of wisdom which will benefit all people, generation after generation. Hence, I no longer reject the idea of donating my body, and I hope more people will follow me to help enhance the quality of medical education.

THE TIGER GATE

By Juan Shao-chiu

The entrance of the gross anatomy lab was like the Tiger Gate between the front and back stages in Cantonese opera. Once I set foot into the lab, I had to set all my emotions aside and start to play the role of a good medical student. Was I afraid? Absolutely! I had never seen



dead bodies. I started to bargain: "Can I just look at the rest of the body except for that symbol of the soul, his face?"

I knew it wouldn't work. At the moment the white cloths covering the body were unwrapped, my muscles, blood vessels and nerves all tightened up. I held my breath and took a quick glimpse at my "teacher."

To my surprise, I saw such a peaceful face! He seemed in deep sleep, tranquil and restful. I was profoundly touched by the beauty and dignity of death. My fear gradually melted and the cool lab felt warmer.

Outside the lab, I could be very sentimental and cry at the end of any life. However once inside the lab, I

had to be tough and cool in order to cut and dissect the body, because later I would be responsible for helping people relieve their physical pain. Looking back, I felt fulfilled and delighted. I wanted to tell him, "I will remember your gracious look forever. Many thanks to you."

HUMANITARIANISM VS. MATERIALISM

By Chen Mei-yin

I used to avoid anything related to death. So, from the first day in medical college, I worried about the anatomy class.

The moment eventually came. Fortunately, the nuns from the Abode of Still Thoughts led us in chanting "Amitabha" before the class began, and that helped calm us down. However, as I unzipped the body bag, I was so indescribably apprehensive. What did a person look like after he died? What kind of person was he before he died? And what right did I have to dissect him?

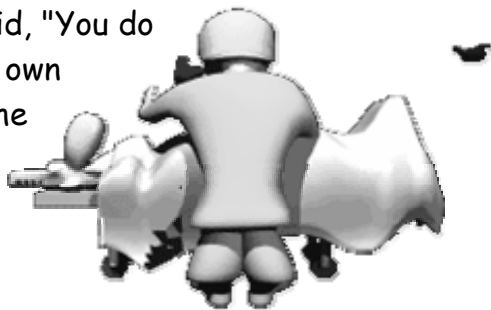
I touched his frozen body and the temperature showed the distinction between us-I was alive and he was dead. Perhaps I was just not ready yet. I had felt so sympathetic when I dissected frogs or mice. How much more uneasy I felt at dissecting a human being!

I wondered what he had been like, what he had done and where his family was now. The more I humanized him, the less I could cut into the body. After all, he was a human being. I thought he deserved respect even after his death. He shouldn't be "materialized," turned into a thing to be used.

Every four students shared a cadaver, so we couldn't let up on ourselves. Though exhausted, I felt that I had to learn every little thing. If I ignorantly cut even a tiny nerve some day, it might affect a patient's life.

Master Cheng Yen said, "You do not have the right to own your body, but only the right to use it."

Those donors transformed their wrecked bodies into something useful. I think the greatest repayment I can give to the donors is to study hard and become a conscientious doctor.



A TREMBLING BEGINNING

By Chen Chun-ting

The demarcation line between life and death is so thin that we can easily go across it. But it is a journey of

no return. We can never get those people back once they go. With the removal of skin layer by layer, I could see the yellowish fat. Holding the scalpel in my hand, I asked myself: if this were a living man tottering on that line between life and death, would I be able to pull him back to this side?

The class was over. It was getting dark outside the lab and the distant mountains were covered with mist. I took one more glance at the lab. Everything was so unforgettable, especially "him."

Recalling the hard work we had done in the lab, we wouldn't have been so impressed by the structures of the human body unless we had seen them. Learning from our mistakes in our experiments, we strove to reach a goal of zero mistakes. Those body donors have not only benefited us small potatoes in the field of medicine, but our future patients as well.

A THRILL I WILL NEVER FORGET

By Li Kuo-hsien

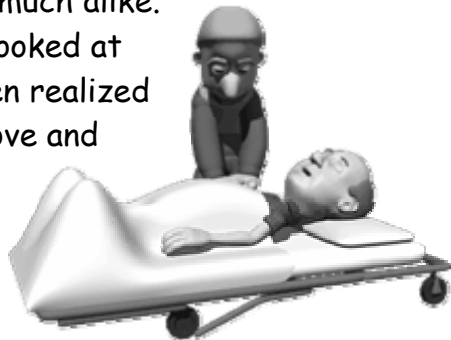
On the first day of class, dressed in white robes, we all stood behind the nuns who were chanting "Amitabha" in time with the tapping of a wooden drum echoing in the classroom. I held a sheet of paper with

a Buddhist scripture on it, but my brain was completely blank.

Though I was agitated at first, I soon got used to everything in the lab, opening the box, unwrapping the white cloths that covered the body... I don't remember when I started to treat him as an experimental item. I consoled myself that in the lab, I had to be fairly unemotional, and so I forgave my lack of concern.

That afternoon when we were preparing to disclose the head, I carelessly cut off a blood vessel beneath the scalp, and the frozen blood clots slowly oozed out. I couldn't stand my ignorance any more. I dropped the knife and fell onto the chair, feeling totally wretched.

For the first time I looked at his face closely, and I noticed that we were so much alike. My heart ached when I looked at his dissected body. I then realized it indeed needed great love and courage to donate one's body. He was as great as a bodhisattva, willing to give even his body.



SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

By Tsai En-lin

The medical students had a group of "teachers" who remained silent all the time, but who used themselves as real-life experiments to drill medical knowledge into the students.

When I started dissecting the body, I felt the pain he suffered as if he had become part of my life. I thought a physician had to be sensitive yet rational, turning emotions and apprehensions into knowledge.

I imagined that he used to be like us, with feelings of happiness and sadness. When he died, he must have been surrounded by his family. Now it was a group of strangers standing around him. Thinking of this inexplicable relationship between us, the feelings of gratitude and respect toward him grew ever more solid. He was a bodhisattva, turning his worldly body into knowledge which was engraved firmly in our minds so that we could save more patients.

Although we never heard him lecture, we did sense his great expectation: that we would become accomplished, dedicated doctors.



A TOUGH JOB

By Wang Po-han

After the Buddhist ceremony commemorating the body donors, all the living people were gone, leaving us behind with dead people in exquisite iron boxes. When the advisor called "Go," everyone immediately started to remove the wrappings, and in a moment the cadavers were all exposed.

The white wrappings scared me. It was "her." The other three teammates and I started to make marks on her chest, like toddlers holding a big pen and trying to draw a straight line on a piece of wrinkled paper. Two weeks later, I took the dissection work as routine, forgetting all fear or even respect for the dead.

In order to keep up with the schedule, I worked carelessly and I often cut off vessels and nerves. At first I thought it was no big deal. However, the more mistakes I made, the less I could control my temper. A thought went across my mind: she was not a disposable commercial item, but an instructor who wanted to help me acquire enough knowledge to save my future patients' lives. I lost my confidence to carry on.

Three things happened that made me think thoroughly about the meaning of body donation. First, a couple of close calls on my motorcycle made me aware that I could join her at any moment. Then one day, when I turned her around, her hair floated loosely in the preservative solution. I suddenly realized that I might possibly have met this person before. Third, I felt furious when I heard someone talk disrespectfully about a body.

I no longer pay my gratitude and respect to the people who gave their bodies just because my instructors told me to. Now I truly feel it in the depth of my heart.

THE TORCH OF LIFE PASSES ON

By Chang En-ting

When we first made our acquaintance, he was lying tranquilly on the table. I could sense that under the khaki skin was a spirit of true love. Yet although he used his body to show me complicated body structures, I only repaid him by breathing on his undisturbed face as I leaned down to work. I don't remember how many afternoons I rummaged inside his body with medical tools,



almost forgetting that he was once a person.

Exhausted after an evening in the lab, I walked through the dark night back to the empty dorm. In the shower, gazing at my naked body, I reflected that there were many people who were once as young as I and who were loved by their families. But when their lives were about to vanish, they chose to make them shine by putting their bodies in our hands. With the end of this life, many doctors-to-be can obtain fundamental medical knowledge which will help save numerous other lives.

He was not simply an anatomy "advisor," but he also instructed me to delve into the mysteries of living and dying. Moreover, his devoted religious spirit inspired in me the true value of life. It is my responsibility to spread his seeds of enthusiasm and love everywhere.

HEART OF GRATITUDE

By Tu Yi-hsun

The first day of class was my birthday. That day I gave thanks to my parents for giving me life twenty-one years ago, and at the same time I experienced the true meaning of life-continuous giving and sacrifice.

In the anatomy class, I pretended to be highly interested and concerned. However, inside my heart, I wondered why we came into this world. Why should one be a good doctor? As soon as the wrappings were removed, I saw the answers in the body's peaceful expressions of kindness, compassion, joy and unselfish giving.

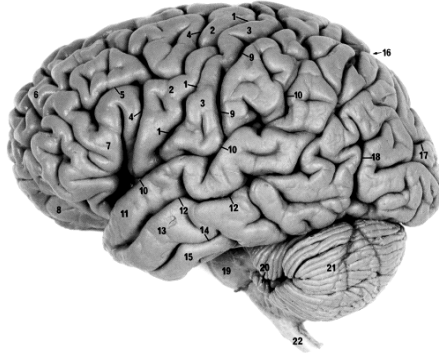
Looking through the lab windows at the statue of the Earth Treasury Bodhisattva, I had an unexplainable feeling of belonging, calm and peaceful. On some lonely nights when I was totally fatigued by the hard work, those people who had given themselves always reminded me that it was worth it all as long as I was able to serve patients in the future.

At the end of the class, I felt we had become old friends and that they had given me so much. All I can do to repay them is to carry their great love to all human beings.



MAY THIS BODY OF MINE BE A SOURCE
OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM TO OTHERS
IN ORDER THAT MANY ARE MORE SKILLFUL IN
HEALING AND BRINGING HAPPINESS
TO HUMANITY!

BRAIN DEATH, VEGETATIVE STATE, COMA & EUTHANASIA



What is DEATH from a MEDICAL point of view?

Most people believe death occurs when a person's heartbeat and breathing stop. This is called "cardiac death." But, medically and legally, death occurs when the entire brain stops working. This is called "brain death."

What is BRAIN DEATH?

When someone is brain dead, it means that there is no blood flow or oxygen to their brain and that their brain including the brain stem is no longer functioning in any capacity and never will again. One must understand that everyone dies of brain death. Whether an old person suffers cardiac arrest/death

resulting in the lack of oxygen and nutrients to the brain, or a younger person suffers a gunshot wound to the head resulting in brain death. Both are still brain death.

The brain can survive for up to about six minutes after the heart stops. The reason to learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is that if CPR is started within six minutes of cardiac arrest, the brain may survive the lack of oxygen. After about six minutes without CPR, however, the brain begins to die.

When a person is brain dead, can the heart still beats?

The diagnosis of "brain death" is only possible because of modern medicine's ability to maintain the functions of supporting organs of the body after the brain is no longer viable. When a person is brain dead, it does not mean that other organs such as the heart, lungs, kidneys or liver are dead although they may function for only a few days without life supporting systems.

If breathing and heartbeat are maintained by machines and medications, a brain dead person will appear to be alive. The person's skin may be warm, the chest will rise and fall in a breathing motion and a

heartbeat is seen on a monitor. But, if there is no brain activity as recorded by an electroencephalograph (EEG), the person is brain dead and therefore medically and legally dead.

Would removing life supporting system like a ventilator be the same as causing the death of my family member or not giving him/her all possible chances?

Once a patient is brain dead, he or she is already dead. The brain will never recover. Since the patient is already dead, you cannot kill him or her by removing respiratory support. The respiratory support equipment only keeps the lungs moving and heart beating, which gives the appearance that a person is still living.

YOU SHOULD NOT TELL THE FAMILY MEMBERS OF A
BRAIN DEATH PATIENT THAT YOU ARE GOING TO SWITCH
OFF THE LIFE SUPPORTING SYSTEM! IT SHOULD BE
SWITCHING OFF THE DEATH SUPPORTING SYSTEM!

-Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr. Alex Delikan-

Are there any clinically documented cases where a patient was declared brain dead and later restored to a normal life?

NO. When you hear about people who were brain dead and later recovered, these people were not actually brain dead! They were in a deep coma or vegetative state with slight brain activity.

What is the difference between BRAIN DEATH, COMA and VEGETATIVE STATE?

Patients who suffer brain death are not in coma. Patients in coma may or may not progress to brain death. Patients in coma may be in deep coma or may survive in what is termed a "vegetative state." The difference between these two groups is that a deep coma patient usually requires hospital care, while a patient in a vegetative state is better and may be released to the family for home care. In either case, the patient is medically and legally considered to be alive with neurological signs and brain activities though may be diminished.

How do we tell that a person is brain dead?

The positive examinations for brain death include the following:

- *The pupils stay in mid-position and do not react to light.*
- *The eyes do not blink when touched (corneal reflex).*

- *The eyes do not rotate in the socket when the head is moved from side to side or up and down (oculo-cephalic reflex).*
- *The eyes do not move when ice water is placed in the ear canal (oculo-vestibular reflex).*
- *The patient does not cough or gag when a suction tube is placed deep into the breathing tube.*
- *The patient does not breathe when taken off the ventilator.*

If clinical examination is equivocal, confirmatory tests may be done. These could include either an electroencephalography (EEG) or blood flow study to demonstrate that the brain is actually no longer functioning.

What is death from a Buddhist point of view?

According to Buddhism, life is a combination of mind/mental force (nama) and matter/physical body (rupa). Mind consists of the consciousness, perceptions, sensations and volitional activities. Matter consists of the four great elements of solidity, fluidity, motion and heat. Death is defined as a separation of mind and matter.

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, death is a process with 8 cycles with corresponding internal and external signs. It is in the 4th cycle that breathing actually ceases but death process is not completed yet. There

are five signs to indicate consciousness leaving the body and therefore the completion of the death process:

1. Loss of warmth from the heart centre in the middle of the chest.

2. Body starts to smell or decompose.

3. One or more drops of red or white fluid leaving the nose or sexual organs.

4. A subtle awareness that the consciousness has left and the body has become like an empty shell.

5. Body slumping forward (in the case of a meditator who has been sitting in meditation after the breath has stopped).

What is the implication of brain death from a Buddhist point of view?

Nobody can be 100% sure whether death process from a Buddhist point of view is actually completed in brain death. But, we know for sure that brain death is irreversible and the death process will eventually be completed. So, we are not breaking the first precept of harming or killing sentient beings if we withhold

the life supporting systems of a loved one who is brain dead. We are just allowing death to occur naturally which is encouraged in Buddhism. By doing this, we can even cultivating compassion by allowing the intensive care unit (ICU) bed to be given to those who will better benefit from it.

Another important implication is that we can generously donate our organs to others if we are brain dead, since we know that we will 'surely die'/already dead if diagnosed with it. Why not make full use of the organs for the happiness of others. After all, we get a whole new set of it in the next life. It is believed that if the body is disposed off before the end of death process whereby the consciousness leaves the body, this will be very disturbing for the person who is going through the final stages of psychological death.

How about organ donation? The usual answer given by the Tibetan lamas to this question is that if the wish to donate one's organs is done with motivation of compassion, then any



disturbances to the death process that this causes is far outweighed by the positive karma that one is creating by this act of giving.

However, the situation is different if a person is in a deep coma or vegetative state because medically, legally and also from a Buddhist point of view they are not dead and there is a chance of regaining consciousness especially in the early phase. So, it is not advisable to remove life supporting systems from a person in deep coma or vegetative state.

What is Euthanasia?

Euthanasia is medically defined as a deliberate intervention undertaken with the intention of ending a life so as to relieve intractable suffering (House of Lords 1994, Walton's 1995). This definition is a rather general one. It can be done voluntarily with the dying patient's request/consent or involuntarily out of mercy. It may be done with the assistance from someone e.g. doctor or a family member or by patient himself/herself (suicide). In October, 1987, the World Medical Association declared that euthanasia is medically unethical. Having said that, there are a few countries in the world e.g. Netherlands that legalize euthanasia but with very strict criteria i.e. must be voluntary, terminal illness,

performed by a physician, assessed by a Psychiatrist etc.

It is important to note that avoiding life sustaining treatment (any medical treatment that serves to prolong life without reversing the underlying medical condition e.g. mechanical ventilation, renal dialysis, blood transfusions, chemotherapy, artificial nutrition) to avoid artificial prolongation of life is NOT euthanasia from a medical point of view. The same goes for withdrawal of life supporting systems in a brain dead person.

What is the Buddhist view on Euthanasia?

This will depend a lot on what is the exact definition of euthanasia in this context. It is definitely acceptable if it is mis-referred to what has been described in the preceding paragraph as in avoiding life sustaining treatment and brain dead which are basically allowing death to occur naturally.

What about a 'typical-strictly-defined euthanasia' - a patient with terminal illness, with a lot of intolerable physical and mental suffering requesting a doctor to give him/her medications to speed up death with the intention to reduce suffering to self and burden to family members?

From a Buddhist point of view, this is not encouraged, as a living being has the results of its own past karma to work out and any interference with the situation will not be anything more than a temporary relief of the suffering it is bound to endure. It is also in a way a subtle form of suicide which is again not encouraged in Buddhism.

Euthanasia is actually a word derived from two Greek words: *eu* meaning good and *thanatos* meaning death. Put together, it means good death. Well, there are so many other ways that we can help a person to die peacefully rather than by euthanasia. We should concentrate our effort to reduce the physical, mental, social and spiritual suffering through effective palliative care e.g. anesthetic service, counseling, social and spiritual support etc. rather than through narrow-minded illusory relief by euthanasia. Bear in mind that a lot of people who say, "Let me die!" are actually deep inside the heart harboring the thoughts of, "PLEASE GIVE ME A REASON TO LIVE - I DON'T WANT TO DIE!".



BUDDHIST FUNERAL RITES

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

Proper Buddhist funeral practices are simple, solemn and dignified religious services.

As practiced in many Buddhist countries, a Buddhist funeral is a simple, solemn and dignified service. Unfortunately, some people have included many unnecessary, extraneous items and superstitious practices into the funeral rites. The extraneous items and practices vary according to the traditions and customs of the people. Rituals were introduced in the past by people who could not understand the nature of life, nature of death, and what life would be after death. When such ideas were incorporated as so-called Buddhist practices, critics tended to condemn Buddhism for expensive and meaningless funeral rites. If they approach proper persons who have studied the real Teachings of the Buddha and Buddhist tradition, they could receive advice on how to perform Buddhist funeral rites in the correct manner. It is most unfortunate that a bad impression has been created that Buddhism encourages people to waste



their money and time on unnecessary rites and rituals. It must be clearly understood that Buddhism has nothing to do with such debased practices.

Buddhists are not very particular regarding the burial or cremation of a dead body. In many Buddhist countries, cremation is customary. For hygienic and economic reasons, it is advisable to cremate. Today, the population in the world is increasing and if we continue to have dead bodies occupying valuable land, then one day all remaining available land will be occupied by the dead and the living will have no place to live.

There are still some people who object to the cremation of dead bodies. They say that cremation is against God's law, in the same way they have objected to many other things in the past. It will take some time for such people to understand that cremation is much more appropriate and convenient than burial.

Besides, Buddhists do not believe that one day someone will come and awaken the departed persons' spirits from their graveyards or give life to the ashes from their urns and decide who should go to heaven and who should go to hell.

The consciousness or mental energy of the departed person has no connection with the body left behind or his or her skeleton or ashes. A dead body is simply the rotten old empty house which the departed person's life occupied. The Buddha called it 'a useless log'. Many people believe that if the deceased is not given a proper burial or if a sanctified tombstone is not placed on the grave, then the soul of the deceased will wander to the four corners of the world and weep and wail and sometimes even return to disturb the relatives. Such a belief cannot be found anywhere in Buddhism.

Some people believe that if the dead body or the ashes of the departed person is buried or enshrined in a particular place by spending a big amount of money, the departed person will be benefited. If we really want to honour a departed person, we must do some meritorious deeds such as giving some donations to deserving cases and charitable or religious activities in memory of the departed ones, and not by performing expensive rites and rituals.

Buddhists believe that when a person dies, rebirth will take place somewhere else according to his or her good or bad actions. As long as a person possesses the craving for existence, that person must experience

rebirth. Only the Arahants, who have gone beyond all passions will have no more rebirths and so after their death, they will attain their final goal Nirvana.*



How do you want your funeral to be?

FUNERAL REFLECTION

Suppose three people (A good friend, a close family member and a priest from the temple that you regularly attend) are invited to your funeral for your eulogy, what would you want them to say about you?

Start living your life as you would like them to say about you upon your death!

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE ON REBIRTH

One of the ways to deal with grief is to reflect on Rebirth, "Life never dies. He/she will be reborn again and have a whole new life". This reflection is of course in accordance with fundamental Buddhist belief. I hereby would like to further support this belief with



scientific evidence, so that we can reflect on it with greater confidence. The leading authority in scientific research on rebirth is Professor Dr. Ian Stevenson.

Ian Stevenson is the former head of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia, and now is the Director of the Division of Personality Studies at the University of Virginia. He has devoted the last 40 years to the scientific documentation of past life memories of children from all over the world and has over 3000 cases in his files. Many people, including skeptics and scholars, agree that these cases offer the best evidence yet for reincarnation.

EITHER DR. STEVENSON IS MAKING A
COLOSSAL MISTAKE, OR HE WILL BE KNOWN AS
THE GALILEO OF THE 20TH CENTURY."

-Dr Harold Lief-
(Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease)

Dr. Stevenson's research into the possibility of reincarnation began in 1960 when he heard of a case in Sri Lanka where a child claimed to remember a past life. He thoroughly questioned the child and the child's parents, as well as the people whom the child claimed were his parents from his past life. This led to Dr. Stevenson's conviction that reincarnation was possibly a reality.

The more cases he pursued, the greater became his drive to scientifically open up and conquer an unknown territory among the world's mysteries, which until now had been excluded from scientific observation. Nonetheless, he believed he could approach and possibly furnish proof of its reality with scientific means.

In 1960, Dr. Stevenson published two articles in the Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research about children who remembered past lives. In 1974, he published his book, *Twenty Cases*

Suggestive of Reincarnation, and became well known wherever this book appeared by those people who already had a long-standing interest in this subject. They were pleased to finally be presented with such fundamental research into reincarnation from a scientific source.

In 35% of cases he investigated, children who died an unnatural death developed phobias. For example, if they had drowned in a past life, then they frequently developed a phobia about going out of their depth in water. If they had been shot, they were often afraid of guns and sometimes loud bangs in general. If they died in a road accident, they would sometimes develop a phobia of traveling in cars, buses or lorries.

Another frequently observed unusual form of behavior, which Dr. Stevenson called phobias, concerns children who express the wish to eat different kinds of food or to wear clothes that were different from those of their culture. If a child had developed an alcohol, tobacco or drug addiction as an adult in a previous incarnation he may express a need for these substances and develop cravings at an early age.



Many of these children with past-life memories show abilities or talents that they had in their previous lives. Often children who were members of the opposite sex in their previous life show difficulty in adjusting to the new sex. These problems relating to the 'sex change' can lead to homosexuality later on in their lives. Former girls who were reborn as boys may wish to dress as girls or prefer to play with girls rather than boys.

Until now all these human oddities have been a mystery to conventional psychiatrists - after all, the parents could not be blamed for their children's behavior in these cases. At long last research into reincarnation is shedding some light

on the subject. In the past, doctors blamed such peculiarities on a lack or a surplus of certain hormones, but now they will have to do some rethinking.



DEATH IS JUST A TEMPORARY END
TO A TEMPORARY EXISTENCE

-Buddha-

THE BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF HEAVEN AND HELL

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

Wise people make their own heaven while foolish people create their own hell here and hereafter.

The Buddhist concept of heaven and hell is entirely different from that in other religions. Buddhists do not accept that these places are eternal. It is unreasonable to condemn a person to eternal hell for his or her human weakness but quite reasonable to give a person every chance to develop him or herself. From the Buddhist point of view, those who go to hell can work themselves upwards by making use of the merit that they had acquired previously. There are no locks on the gates of hell. Hell is a temporary place and there is no reason for those beings to suffer there forever.



The Buddha's Teaching shows us that there are heavens and hells not only beyond this world, but in this very world itself. Thus the Buddhist conception of heaven and hell is very reasonable. For instance,

the Buddha once said, "When the average ignorant person makes an assertion to the effect that there is a Hell (patala) under the ocean he is making a statement which is false and without basis. The word 'Hell' is a term for painful sensations." The idea of one particular ready-made place or a place created by god as heaven and hell is not acceptable to the Buddhist concept.

The fire of hell in this world is hotter than that of any possible hell in the world-beyond. There is no fire equal to anger, lust or greed and ignorance. According to the Buddha, we are burning from eleven kinds of physical pain and mental agony: lust, hatred, illusion, sickness, decay, death, worry, lamentation, pain (physical and mental), melancholy and grief. People can burn the entire world with some of these fires of mental discord. From a Buddhist point of view, the easiest way to define hell and heaven is that wherever there is more suffering, either in this world or any other planes of existence, that place is a hell to those who suffer. And where there is more pleasure or happiness, either in this world or any other plane of existence, that place is a heaven to those who enjoy their worldly life in that particular place. However, as the human realm is a mixture of both pain and happiness, human beings experience both pain and

happiness and will be able to realise the real nature of life. But in many other planes of existence inhabitants have less chance for this realisation. In certain places there is more suffering than pleasure while in some other places there is more pleasure than suffering.

Buddhists believe that after death rebirth can take place in any one of a number of possible existences. This future existence is conditioned by the last thought-moment a person experiences at the point of death. This last thought which determines the next existence results from the past actions of a man either in this life or before that. Hence, if the predominant thought reflects meritorious action, then he or she will find the future existence in a happy state. But that state is temporary and when it is exhausted a new life must begin all over again, determined by another dominating 'karmic' energy which lies dormant in the subconscious mind, waiting for the right conditions to become active. This is very much like a seed waiting for rain and sunshine to sprout. This repetitious process goes on endlessly unless one arrives at 'Right View' and makes a firm resolve to follow the Noble Path which produces the ultimate happiness of Nirvana. Heaven is a temporary place where those who have done good deeds experience more sensual pleasures for a longer period.

Hell is another temporary place where those evil doers experience more physical and mental suffering. It is not justifiable to believe that such places are permanent. There is no god behind the scene of heaven and hell. Each and every person experiences pain or pleasure according to good and bad karma. Buddhists never try to introduce Buddhism by frightening people through hell-fire or enticing people by pointing to paradise. Their main purpose is character building and mental training. Buddhists can practice their religion without aiming at heaven or without developing fear of hell. Their duty is to lead righteous lives by upholding humane qualities and peace of mind.



HAPPINESS IS A SPACE BETWEEN TWO
SUFFERING & SUFFERING IS A SPACE
BETWEEN TWO HAPPINESS

-Ajahn Brahmavamso-

DEDICATION OF MERITS TO THE DEPARTED ONES AS SKILLFUL BEREAVEMENT

Life is uncertain, death is certain! Though we all may intellectually know this, we might not be able to accept the death of a loved one at the emotional level. A lot of people suffer from negative emotions e.g. guilt when a loved one passes away e.g. a son in overseas might feel guilty for not been able to be with his mother at the point of death. Excessive guilt or any other negative emotions is not healthy during bereavement. One of the ways to deal with such pathological emotion is to find a way for the living ones to get connected to the departed ones.

From a Buddhist perspective, one of such ways to connect ourselves to the departed ones is by dedication of our merits accrued through our wholesome actions to them. It is believed that by doing so, we can help them to achieve a more favourable birth if they are reborn in woeful states.



Therefore, it is a common practice among Buddhist to invite monks for dana (alms giving) after the death of

a loved one. Before the commencement of a meritorious deed e.g. dana, whenever possible, it is good to make a formal invitation to the departed one:

"The late so-and-so, if you are aware that we are dedicating these merits to you, we now invite you to come and witness this act. May you benefit by appreciating and rejoicing in our dedication of merits".

It is hoped that by making such formal invitation, the departed can be aware of the relatives' offerings and the guardian devas there will allow him/her to come to witness the event and participate in the sharing of merits later.

After the meritorious deeds have been performed, then the dedication of merits can be performed by making a verbal announcement as follows:

"Today we have done the following meritorious deeds: List them out e.g. taking refuge in the Triple Gem, observing the Five Precepts, given dana to the Sangha, listened to the Dharma etc. We now offer a share of these merits especially to the late so-and-so".

This dedication of merits can act as powerful spiritual method for us to get connected to the departed ones and slowly let them go in peace. What a beautiful and skilful bereavement!



Hello! Thank you very much
for the spiritual food of merits!
Don't worry about me,
I'm now well, happy and RIP!

HOW THE BUDDHA DIED

-Venerable Dr. Mettanando-

During Wesak Day, we are informed that it is also the day Buddha attained Parinibbana. But, not many know how the Buddha died. Ancient texts weave two stories about the Lord Buddha's death. Was it planned and willed by the Buddha, or was it food poisoning, or something else altogether? Here's an account.....



The Mahaparinibbana Sutta, from the Long Discourse of Pali Tipitaka, is without doubt the most reliable source for details on the death of Siddhattha Gotama (BCE 563-483), the Lord Buddha. It is composed in a narrative style that allows readers to follow the story of the last days of the Buddha, beginning a few months before he died.

To understand what really happened to the Buddha is not a simple matter, though. The sutta, or discourse, paints two conflicting personalities of the Buddha, one overriding the other.

The first personality was that of a miracle worker who beamed himself and his entourage of monks across the Ganges River (D II, 89), who had a divine vision of the settlement of gods on earth (D II, 87), who could live until the end of the world on condition that someone invite him to do so (D II, 103), who determined the time of his own death (D II, 105), and whose death was glorified by the shower of heavenly flowers and sandal powder and divine music (D II, 138).

The other personality was that of an aged being who was failing in health (D II, 120), who almost lost his life because of a severe pain during his last retreat at Vesali (D II, 100), and who was forced to come to terms with his unexpected illness and death after consuming a special cuisine offered by his generous host.

These two personalities take turns emerging in different parts of the narrative. Moreover, there also appear to be two explanations of the Buddha's cause of death: One is that the Buddha died because his attendant, Ananda, failed to invite him to live on to the age of the world or even longer (D II, 117). The other is that he died by a sudden illness which began after he ate what is known as "Sukaramaddava" (D II, 127-157).

The former story was probably a legend, or the result of a political struggle within the Buddhist community during a stage of transition, whereas the latter sounds more realistic and accurate in describing a real life situation that happened in the Buddha's last days.

A number of studies have focused on the nature of the special cuisine that the Buddha ate during his last meal as being the agent of his death.

However, there is also another approach based on the description of the symptoms and signs given in the sutta, which modern medical knowledge can shed light on.



In another mural painting at Wat Ratchasittharam, the Lord Buddha is approaching death, but he still takes time to answer questions put forth by the ascetic Subhadda, his last convert who, after being admitted to the Buddhist Order, became an arahant (enlightened monk).

What we know

In the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, we are told that the Buddha became ill suddenly after he ate a special delicacy, Sukaramaddava, literally translated as "soft pork", which had been prepared by his generous host,

Cunda Kammaraputta. The name of the cuisine has attracted the attention of many scholars, and it has been the focus of academic research on the nature of the meal or ingredients used in the cooking of this special dish.

The sutta itself provides details concerning the signs and symptoms of his illness in addition to some reliable information about his circumstances over the previous four months, and these details are also medically significant.

The sutta begins with King Ajatasattus' plot to conquer a rival state, Vajji. The Buddha had journeyed to Vajji to enter his last rainy-season retreat. It was during this retreat that he fell ill. The symptoms of the illness were sudden, severe pain.

However, the sutta provides no description of the location and character of his pain. It mentions his illness briefly, and says that the pain was intense, and almost killed him.

Subsequently, the Buddha was visited by Mara, the God of Death, who invited him to pass away. The Buddha did not accept the invitation right away. It was only after Ananda, his attendant, failed to recognise his hint for an invitation to remain that he

died. This piece of the message, though tied up with myth and supernaturalism, gives us some medically significant information. When the sutta was composed, its author was under the impression that the Buddha died, not because of the food he ate, but because he already had an underlying illness that was serious and acute and had the same symptoms of the disease that finally killed him.

The Timing

Theravada Buddhist tradition has adhered to the assumption that the historical Buddha passed away during the night of the full moon in the lunar month of Visakha (which falls sometime in May to June). But the timing contradicts information given in the sutta, which states clearly that the Buddha died soon after the rainy-season retreat, most likely during the autumn or mid-winter, that is, November to January.

A description of the miracle of the unseasonal blooming of leaves and flowers on the sala trees, when the Buddha was laid down between them, indicates the time frame given in the sutta.

Autumn and winter, however, are seasons that are not favourable for the growth of mushrooms, which some

scholars believe to be the source of the poison that the Buddha ate during his last meal.

Diagnosis

The sutta tells us that the Buddha felt ill immediately after eating the Sukaramaddava. Since we do not know anything about the nature of this food, it is difficult to name it as the direct cause of the Buddha's illness. But from the descriptions given, the onset of the illness was quick.



While eating, he felt there was something wrong with the food and he suggested his host have the food buried. Soon afterward, he suffered severe stomach pain and passed blood from his rectum.

We can reasonably assume that the illness started while he was having his meal, making him think there was something wrong with the unfamiliar delicacy. Out of his compassion for others, he had it buried.

Was food poisoning the cause of the illness? It seems unlikely. The symptoms described do not indicate food poisoning, which can be very acute, but would hardly cause diarrhoea with blood. Usually, food poisoning caused by bacteria does not manifest itself

immediately, but takes an incubation period of two to 12 hours to manifest itself, normally with acute diarrhoea and vomiting, but not the passage of blood.

Another possibility is chemical poisoning, which also has an immediate effect, but it is unusual for chemical poisoning to cause severe intestinal bleeding. Food poisoning with immediate intestinal bleeding could only have been caused by corrosive chemicals such as strong acids, which can easily lead to immediate illness. But corrosive chemicals should have caused bleeding in the upper intestinal tract, leading to vomiting blood. None of these severe signs are mentioned in the text.

Peptic ulcer diseases can be excluded from the list of possible illnesses as well. In spite of the fact that their onset is immediate, they are seldom accompanied by bloody stool. A gastric ulcer with intestinal bleeding produces black stool when the ulcer penetrates a blood vessel. An ulcer higher up in the digestive tract would be more likely to manifest itself as bloody vomiting, not a passage of blood through the rectum.

Other evidence against this possibility is that a patient with a large gastric ulcer usually does not have an appetite. By accepting the invitation for lunch

with the host, we can assume that the Buddha felt as healthy as any man in his early 80s would feel. Given his age we cannot rule out that the Buddha did not have a chronic disease, such as cancer or tuberculosis or a tropical infection such as dysentery or typhoid, which could have been quite common in the Buddha's time.

These diseases could produce bleeding of the lower intestine, depending on their location. They also agree with the history of his earlier illness during the retreat. But they can be ruled out, since they are usually accompanied by other symptoms, such as lethargy, loss of appetite, weight loss, growth or mass in the abdomen. None of these symptoms were mentioned in the sutta.

A large haemorrhoid can cause severe rectal bleeding, but it is unlikely that a haemorrhoid could cause severe abdominal pain unless it is strangulated. But then it would have greatly disturbed the walking of the Buddha to the house of his host, and rarely is haemorrhoid bleeding triggered by a meal.

Mesenteric infarction

A disease that matches the described symptoms-accompanied by acute abdominal pain and the passage

of blood, commonly found among elderly people, and triggered by a meal is mesenteric infarction, caused by an obstruction of the blood vessels of the mesentery. It is lethal. Acute mesenteric ischaemia (a reduction in the blood supply to the mesentery) is a grave condition with a high rate of mortality.

The mesentery is a part of the intestinal wall that binds the whole intestinal tract to the abdominal cavity. An infarction of the vessels of the mesentery normally causes the death of the tissue in a large section of the intestinal tract, which results in a laceration of the intestinal wall.

This normally produces severe pain in the abdomen and the passage of blood. The patient usually dies of acute blood loss. This condition matches the information given in the sutta. It is also confirmed later when the Buddha asked Ananda to fetch some water for him to drink, indicating intense thirst.

As the story goes, Ananda refused, as he saw no source for clean water. He argued with the Buddha that the nearby stream had been muddied by a large caravan of carts. But the Buddha insisted he fetch water anyway.

A question arises at this point: Why did the Buddha not go to the water himself, instead of pressing his unwilling attendant to do so? The answer is simple. The Buddha was suffering from shock caused by severe blood loss. He could no longer walk, and from then to his death bed he was most likely carried on a stretcher.

If this was indeed the situation, the sutta remains silent about the Buddha's traveling to his deathbed, possibly because the author felt that it would be an embarrassment for the Buddha. Geographically, we know that the distance between the place believed to be the house of Cunda and the place where the Buddha died was about 15 to 20 kilometres. It is not possible for a patient with such a grave illness to walk such a distance.

More likely, what happened was that the Buddha was carried on a stretcher by a group of monks to Kusinara (Kushinagara).

It remains a point of debate whether the Buddha really determined to pass away at this city, presumably not much larger than a town. From the direction of the Buddha's journey, given in the sutta, he was moving north from Rajagaha. It is possible that he did not intend to die there, but in the town

where he was born, which would have taken a period of three months to reach.

From the sutta, it is clear that the Buddha was not anticipating his sudden illness, or else he would not have accepted the invitation of his host. Kusinara was probably the nearest town where he could find a doctor to take care of him. It is not difficult to see a group of monks hurriedly carrying the Buddha on a stretcher to the nearest town to save his life.

Before passing away, the Buddha told Ananda that Cunda was not to be blamed and that his death was not caused by eating Sukaramaddava. The statement is significant. The meal was not the direct cause of his death. The Buddha knew that the symptom was a repeat of an experience he'd had a few months earlier, the one which had almost killed him.

Sukaramaddava, no matter the ingredients or how it was cooked, was not the direct cause of his sudden illness.

Progression of the disease

Mesenteric infarction is a disease commonly found among elderly people, caused by the obstruction of the main artery that supplies the middle section of

the bowel-the small intestine-with blood. The most common cause of the obstruction is the degeneration of the wall of the blood vessel, the superior mesenteric artery, causing severe abdominal pain, also known as abdominal angina.

Normally, the pain is triggered by a large meal, which requires a higher flow of blood to the digestive tract. As the obstruction persists, the bowel is deprived of its blood supply, which subsequently leads to an infarction, or gangrene, of a section of the intestinal tract. This in turn results in a laceration of the intestinal wall, profuse bleeding into the intestinal tract, and then bloody diarrhoea.

The disease gets worse as the liquid and content of the intestine oozes out into the peritoneal cavity, causing peritonitis or inflammation of the abdominal walls. This is already a lethal condition for the patient, who often dies due to the loss of blood and other fluid. If it is not corrected by surgery, the disease often progresses to septic shock due to bacterial toxins infiltrating the blood stream.

Retrospective analysis

From the diagnosis given above, we can be rather certain that the Buddha suffered from mesenteric

infarction caused by an occlusion of the superior mesenteric artery. This was the cause of the pain that almost killed him a few months earlier during his last rainy-season retreat.

With the progress of the illness, some of the mucosal lining of his intestine sloughed off, and this site became the origin of the bleeding. Arteriosclerosis, the hardening of the vessel wall caused by ageing, was the cause of the arterial occlusion, a small blockage that did not result in bloody diarrhoea, but is a symptom, also known to us as abdominal angina.

He had his second attack while he was eating the Sukaramaddava. The pain was probably not intense in the beginning, but made him feel that there was something wrong. Suspicious about the nature of the food, he asked his host to have it all buried, so that others might not suffer from it.

Soon, the Buddha realised that the illness was serious, with the passage of blood and more severe pain in his abdomen. Due to the loss of blood, he went into shock. The degree of dehydration was so severe that he could not maintain himself any longer and he had to take shelter at a tree along the way.

Feeling very thirsty and exhausted, he got Ananda to collect water for him to drink, even though he knew that the water was muddied. It was there that he collapsed until his entourage carried him to the nearest town, Kusinara, where there would have been a chance of finding a doctor or lodging for him to recover in.

It was probably true that the Buddha got better after drinking to replace his fluid loss, and resting on the stretcher. The experience with the symptoms told him that his sudden illness was the second attack of an existing disease. He told Ananda that the meal was not the cause of his illness, and that Cunda was not to blame.

A patient with shock, dehydration and profuse blood loss usually feels very cold. This was the reason why he told his attendant to prepare a bed using four sheets of ifsanghati nf. According to Buddhist monastic discipline, a ifsanghati nf is a cloak, or extra piece of robe, very large, the size of a bed sheet, which the Buddha allowed monks and nuns to wear in winter.

This information reflects how cold the Buddha felt because of his loss of blood. Clinically, it is not possible for a patient who is in a state of shock with

severe abdominal pain, most likely peritonitis, pale and shivering, to be ambulatory.

The Buddha was most likely put into a lodging, where he was nursed and warmed, located in the city of Kusinara. This view is also confirmed with the description of Ananda who, weeping, swoons and holds onto the door of his lodge after learning that the Buddha was about to pass away.

Normally, a patient with mesenteric infarction could live 10 to 20 hours. From the sutta we learn that the Buddha died about 15 to 18 hours after the attack. During that time, his attendants would have tried their best to comfort him, for example, by warming the room where he was resting, or by dripping some water into his mouth to quench his lingering thirst, or by giving him some herbal drinks. But it would be highly unlikely that a shivering patient would need someone to fan him as is described in the sutta.

Off and on, he may have recovered from a state of exhaustion, allowing him to continue his dialogues with a few people. Most of his last words could have been true, and they were memorised by generations of monks until they were transcribed. But finally, late into the night, the Buddha died during a second wave

of septic shock. His illness stemmed from natural causes coupled with his age, just as it would for anyone else.

Conclusion

The hypothesis outlined above explains several scenes in the narrative of the sutta, namely, the pressuring of Ananda to fetch water, the Buddha's request for a fourfold cloak for his bed, the ordering of the meal to be buried, and so on.



It also reveals another possibility of the actual means of transportation of the Buddha to Kusinara and the site of his death bed. Sukaramaddava, whatever its nature, was unlikely to have been the direct cause of his illness. The Buddha did not die by food poisoning. Rather, it was the size of the meal, relatively too large for his already troubled digestive tract, that triggered the second attack of mesenteric infarction that brought an end to his life.

Dr. Mettanando Bhikkhu was a physician before entering the monkhood. He is currently based at Wat Raja Orasaram, Thailand.

Chapter 10

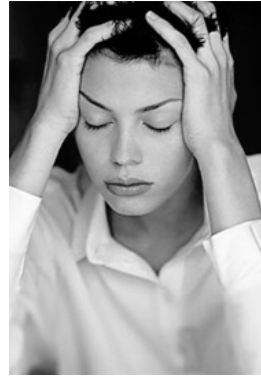


MENTAL HEALTH

MENTAL IMBALANCE & COPING WITH STRESS

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammamnanda-

Mental imbalance which we regard as madness is a big problem. By violating an ethical way of life, man disturbs his own peace and happiness and that of others. Then by bringing external incidents into the mind miseries, excitement, fear and insecurity are created.



Many people have to suffer from frustration and nervous breakdowns because they have not trained their minds to maintain contentment. They have developed only craving for sensual pleasures. To them development means development of craving.

As a result, they also develop unhealthy competition and violence. That is how they have turned the whole world into a chaotic situation. After that, everyone cries for peace. People accuse god or the devil of putting them in misery. They do pray and worship to escape from the problems which they themselves created.

We can understand now who actually creates problems and who can overcome them. THE BUDDHA SAYS THE WORLD IS WITHIN YOU. WHEN YOU DISCIPLINE YOURSELF, THE WHOLE WORLD IS DISCIPLINED AND PEACE IS MAINTAINED. It is not necessary to beg for peace from others. Good and bad, peace and violence, all exist because of the trained and untrained mind.

The word stress is borrowed from physics and engineering, where it has a very precise meaning; a force of sufficient magnitude to distorted or deform. In psychiatric practice however stress involves an individual's physical and emotional reaction to pressure from his environment and from himself. There are two major types of stress; the stress involved in the loss of a loved one, or a job, poor self esteem that comes when a person's level of aspiration is impossibly high; and the stress involved in treats to the individual's status, goals, health and security. Stress gets its bad name because it may become an unavoidable part of life, and cause one to be constantly agitated. When this happens it is possible to become overloaded and suffer physically or emotionally, or both.

Stress can be caused by any number of factors, including changes, both good and bad, personal

problems, physical difficulties, illness etc. Common sources of stress are; death of spouse or close friend, marital separation, divorce, sexual difficulties, change of residence, child leaving home, pregnancy, in-law troubles, impending foreclosure of mortgage, dismissal (from work), redundancy, change in work responsibilities or working conditions and trouble with the boss.

Each period of one's life had its own set of stresses. In early life, the child has to cope with the immediate family group and the demands of school, adjusting to the personality of the teacher and to the other children which can be very stressful, as can the problem of boy and girl relationship in later adolescence.

Then there are the academic stresses of college years and worries over career choice. After college, for most there are the problems of the first years of marriage. These can be quite serious and often lead to early divorce. The problems of having children bear heavily on women, while men have early career problems.

Some of the stress related illness includes peptic ulcers, migraine headaches, depression, high blood

pressure, stroke and heart attacks. Continuous stress can weaken the body's immune system, and as a result the system may become less effective in battling infections. Some authorities even suggest that chronic excessive stress may contribute to development and progression of cancer.

In times of stress, the body secretes a cascade of brain chemicals and hormones including adrenaline and hydrocortisone, that stimulate what is known as the 'fight or flight' response. Adrenaline increases the heart rate and breathing, and prepares the body to fight an external threat, or flee from it. Hydrocortisone helps to maintain its readiness for dealing with stress. Thus when we hear bad news on telephone, our immediate reaction is one triggered by adrenaline, followed by an increase secretion of hydrocortisone.



The hormones that help us to cope with stress for a short period, however can cause health problems if we are subjected to long-term stress. Constant stress causes the body to secrete adrenaline and hydrocortisone on a continuous basis, and in time their presence in the blood stream may be erosive. Prolonged high levels of adrenaline, for example,

force the heart and lungs to work overtime and keep blood pressure above normal level. In time these changes may contribute to strokes or heart attacks.

Anxiety is the feeling of apprehension or uneasiness one gets when expecting danger. We all face some anxiety in order to perform difficult tasks well, but too much can be incapacitating. Anxiety disorders constitute the most common group of mental illnesses, including the phobias, panic disorder and post traumatic stress disorder. Many people have a simple phobia - a fear of specific objects or situations. Simple phobias are fairly common, affecting about 3% of the population.

The phobias are defined as obsessive, persistent, unrealistic, intense fears of an object or situation. Common ones are acrophobia (fear of heights); claustrophobia (fear of confined spaces); agoraphobia (fear of leaving the familiar setting of the home and being a crowd or public space) and xenophobia (fear of strangers). They tend to avoid social situations lest they become humiliated or embarrassed.

Insomnia or difficulty in sleeping is common in many people under many different circumstances. In fact more than 10% of people may have sleeping problems. If one is facing a temporary but important deadline at

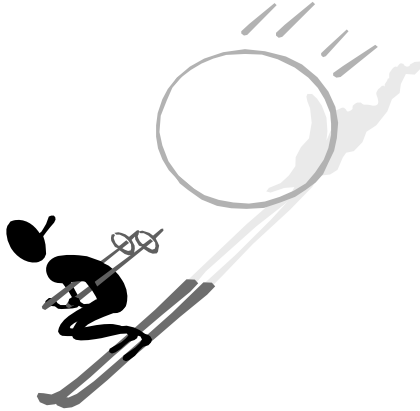
work or are under a lot of pressure, he may worry and therefore lose sleep. Our bodies prefer regular day time activity, so shift workers have trouble adjusting their pattern of sleep.

Certain people particularly war veterans may suffer from what is known as post-traumatic stress disorder during the war such as explosions following artillery bombardment (shell-shock) and combat exposure, and often develop such long-term stress reactions. And the symptoms may appear or intensify long after the trauma had passed. One would experience recurrent troubling thoughts, memories and frightening dreams or nightmares. One could be excessively irritable or anxious and may startle easily. A times he may seem to withdraw, lose interest in things he usually enjoys and feel detached from others.



The best thing one can do to cope with stress or stressful situations in daily life are perhaps obvious, but nevertheless important: eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, exercise everyday and take time to do the things you enjoy. Do not smoke or abuse alcohol or other drugs. People who are easily upset and acutely sensitive to stress can try to reduce their reactions by learning relaxation techniques, meditation and behavioural modification techniques.

NOBLE TRUTH OF STRESS



"NOW WHAT IS THE NOBLE TRUTH OF STRESS?
BIRTH IS STRESS, AGING IS STRESS, DEATH IS STRESS;
SORROW, LAMENTATION, PAIN, DISTRESS & DESPAIR
ARE STRESS; ASSOCIATION WITH THE HATEFUL IS STRESS;
SEPARATION FROM THE LOVED IS STRESS;
NOT GETTING WHAT IS WANTED IS STRESS;
IN SHORT, THE 5 CLINGING-AGGREGATES ARE STRESS.

-Maha-Satipatthana Sutta-

PERFECT SENSE OF STRESS

Science tells us that we all have 5 senses:

SIGHT
HEARING
TASTE
SMELL
TOUCH



From a Buddhist point of view, there is the sixth sense - MIND SENSE.

In order to manage stress effectively, we need to have two extra senses:

7th Sense of HUMOUR - to be able to laugh at our problem in life and learn to grow from it.

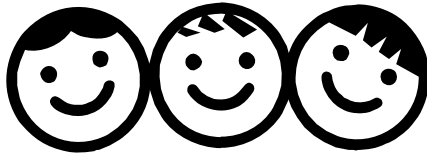
8th Sense of PERSPECTIVE - to be able to count our blessings in life and be grateful for everything.

We need to have the 9th sense to acquire the 7th and 8th sense - COMMON SENSE.

Then, life will have a 10th sense - PERFECT SENSE!

THE ULTIMATE MENTAL HEALTH

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health is a complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not just the mere absence of disease. This is indeed a very holistic definition. Over the years, more and more importance has been given to mental health as it is often neglected. There is no health without mental health!



The ability to MAINTAIN A HARMONIOUS
RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS, ability to TAKE
PART IN COMMUNITY'S ACTIVITY & ability to
CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY

The above is the definition of mental health from WHO. In a simplified way, a mentally healthy person is one with these characteristics:

- Feel good about themselves
- Feel comfortable with others
- Able to cope with demands of life

One can easily see that these characteristics of mental health can easily be achieved by practicing the Dharma. This is not surprising at all since the Buddha's teaching also emphasizes a lot on mental development:

DO GOOD, AVOID EVIL
& PURIFICATION OF THE MIND!
THIS IS THE TEACHINGS OF ALL BUDDHAS

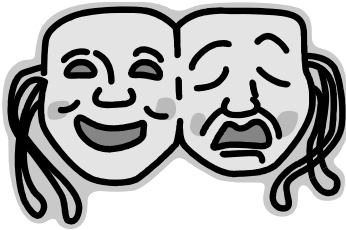
One of the important aspects emphasized in mental health is that our physical and mental health is interconnected. The Buddha has long understood this and that is why mind-body has always been considered as inseparable in Buddhism. It is because of this reason that many healing principles in Buddhism target at the mind.

Is a mentally healthy person an enlightened being? From a secular point of view, a mentally healthy person is generally a happy person with good quality of life. But, from a Buddhist perspective, there are many levels of happiness. Nirvana is of course the ultimate goal standard of happiness in Buddhism attained upon enlightenment. Therefore, a mentally health person may not be an enlightened person. In a way,



enlightenment is ultimate mental health from the way I look at it. The Buddha says,

THE SYMPTOMS OF MADNESS
IS FOUND IN ALL WORLDLY BEINGS



Is it true that we are all 'mad'? I have to admit I am and we are. We can be mentally healthy at times but we are still 'mad' from the Buddha's longitudinal point of view, since we are mostly not enlightened. It is estimated that 1 in 5 people would have experienced at least one episode of Major Depression (a psychiatric disorder) in their lifetime. This is excluding those with milder form of depression. If we look at life from a samsaric (repeated cycle of births and deaths) point of view, we can confidently say that none has never experienced a Major Depression. The life-after-life time prevalence of Major Depression is 100%. Therefore, what the Buddha says is correct. We are all MAD as we are not enlightened! We will only be completely immune to depression and free from madness upon enlightenment.

BUDDHIST 'REALLY ARE HAPPIER'

-BBC News-

Scientists say they have evidence to show that Buddhists really are happier and calmer than other people. Tests carried out in the United States reveal that areas of their brain associated with good mood and positive feelings are more active. The findings come as another study suggests that Buddhist meditation can help to calm people.



IS MY BRAIN ACTUALLY HAPPIER?

Researchers at University of California San Francisco Medical Centre have found the practice can tame the *AMYGDALA*, an area of the brain which is the hub of fear memory. They found that experienced Buddhists, who meditate regularly, were less likely to be shocked, flustered, surprised or as angry compared to other people.

Paul Ekman, who carried out the study, said: "THE MOST REASONABLE HYPOTHESIS IS THAT THERE IS

SOMETHING ABOUT CONSCIENTIOUS BUDDHIST PRACTICE THAT RESULTS IN THE KIND OF HAPPINESS WE ALL SEEK."

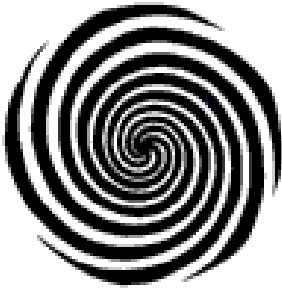
Brain activity

In a separate study, scientists at the University of Wisconsin at Madison used new scanning techniques to examine brain activity in a group of Buddhists. Their tests revealed activity in the LEFT PREFRONTAL LOBES of experienced Buddhist practitioners. This area is linked to positive emotions, self-control and temperament.

Their tests showed these areas of the Buddhists' brains are constantly lit up and not just when they are meditating. This, the scientists said, suggests they are more likely to experience positive emotions and be in good mood.

"WE CAN NOW HYPOTHESE WITH SOME CONFIDENCE THAT THOSE APPARENTLY HAPPY, CALM BUDDHIST SOULS ONE REGULARLY COMES ACROSS IN PLACES SUCH AS DHARAMSALA, INDIA, REALLY ARE HAPPY," said Professor Owen Flanagan, of Duke University in North Carolina. Dharamsala is the home base of exiled Tibetan leader the Dalai Lama. The studies are published in New Scientist magazine.

BUDDHA AS A PSYCHOTHERAPIST



There is a popular Buddhist story for skilful healing of those who are grieving. Kisa Gotami was a young woman whose infant son had died. Quite naturally, she was very attached to her baby and being overcome with grief. She walked around her village with the dead body and begged everyone to restore her son to life. Finally, she came to the Buddha who knew that in her distracted state she was not ready to listen to an intellectual explanation of the nature of death. Instead, he wanted her to realize this truth for herself. So, he said he would help her if she could bring a handful of mustard seeds from a person who had not lost a loved one.

Kisa Gotami eagerly went from house to house but while people were happy to give her the mustard seeds, everyone told her that they had experienced the death of someone close to them during their lifetime. As the day wore on, Kisa Gotami was becoming tired and her intense grief was abated. Her mind was now able to see that death is the common

inheritance of anyone who is born. Her son who had been born had to die. Even if the Buddha had restored him to life, he would have died eventually anyway. When he realised this, she began to understand that all existence is meaningless. She buried her dead son, returned to the Buddha and became a nun and soon realised the Ultimate Happiness.

The above story is a typical example of a form of modern psychotherapy known as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). This special form of therapy was initially used to treat patients suffering from depression due to habitual negative irrational thought. The therapist typically prescribes an exercise known as behavioural experiment that will gradually leads a person to the awareness of his/her irrational thought and thus help to eradicate it. For example, a person who is distress by her irrational thought that everybody is actively commenting on her ugly pimples may be told to interview people around her to find out whether they are actually doing that. In the process, she may discover that nobody pays much attention to her pimples. In fact, it may be so that some don't even notice her enough to remember seeing her before, not to mention her pimples. From this sort of exercise, one gains insight and depression is relieved.

What the Buddha did in the story of Kisa Gotami fits exactly into the process of a CBT. While CBT was only 're-discovered' in 1960's' by Aaron T. Beck, the Buddha has been using the principles of CBT since more that 2500 years ago. There is indeed a lot more we can learn from the Buddha with regards to psychotherapy.



NOT UP IN THE AIR,
NOR IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEA,
NOR GOING INTO A CLEFT
IN THE MOUNTAINS -
NOWHERE ON EARTH
IS A SPOT TO BE FOUND
WHERE YOU COULD STAY &
NOT SUCCUMB TO DEATH.

-Dhammapada 128-

ANTIDOTE FOR DEPRESSION

Major Depression is the most common mental disorder. As already been mentioned earlier, 1 in 5 people will suffer from Depression at least once in their lifetime. Depression is often associated with habitual negative pattern of thinking. This is known as cognitive errors in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), a form of modern psychotherapy for depression. The aim of this therapy is to help the depressed person to be aware of and correct the distorted way of thinking.



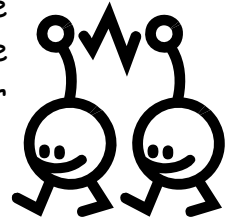
In Buddhism, there is this very important term called YONISO MANASIKARA which has been translated as wise reflection or skilful attention. In simple, it is positive thinking or positive mental attitude. This is very important to keep us afloat, not letting the mind sink into depression, or if it does become depressed, then not to let it stay that way too long. The principle of how it works to counter depression is similar to as in CBT although the possible ways of thought reframing is more comprehensive and spiritual in nature.

The following are some of the ways to keep our mind calm, happy and peaceful in the spirit of YONISO MANASIKARA:

1. Reflect on the GREATNESS of the Buddha. This will automatically awakens the Buddha nature (pure potential) within us and gravitate our thoughts towards wholesomeness.
2. Count the BLESSINGS in life. Don't always look at the things that went wrong in life. Instead, be grateful to those things that have gone right and didn't go wrong.
3. It could have been WORSE. Contentment is the greatest wealth! Don't always compare ourselves with those who are better. There are many who are worse than us and remember that we could have been worse like them.
4. Reflect on KARMA. Everything arises with a cause! If we encounter injustice in life and there is nothing much we can do about it, we can reflect, "This could be due to my past bad karma. Good! I can now clear my karmic debts".



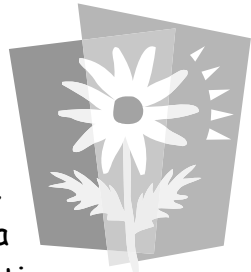
5. Remember that we are NOT PERFECT - not everyone is a Buddha. When we are aware of that, we will naturally demand less from others and feel less victimised. We also tend to blame ourselves less.
6. This will also PASS. Everything that arises in life will pass away! Nothing in life remains forever. The same goes to all the obstacles we encounter. It doesn't stay forever and realising this is a relief. Long live impermanence!
7. Transform PAIN into WISDOM. Everything happens with a good purpose. Be grateful to our obstacles in life. They teach us valuable lessons e.g. sickness teaches us to appreciate health and creates the urgency in us to practice the Dharma.
8. Life is uncertain, DEATH is certain. It is good to skilfully reflect on death occasionally. If we did that, we will find that a lot of our dissatisfactions in life are relatively insignificant e.g. are we still going to quarrel with our spouse on who is right if we were to have only 3 more months to live?



9. None is FREE FROM BLAME. To expect everybody to like us is irrational. Worse still if we blame ourselves for not pleasing everyone. Even the Buddha who is so great can have enemies. Who are we to expect blamelessness in our lives?

10. We are one BIG FAMILY. We have gone through numerous rebirths in samsara. None that we encounter in this life has not been our friends or family members in our past lives. If we reflect in this hello-we-meet-again attitude, we will probably be able to tolerate people around us better, especially those nasty ones.

11. Touch GOOD SEEDS in others. Everyone is born with Buddha nature. The nasty people around us also have equal potential to become a Buddha with right conditions.

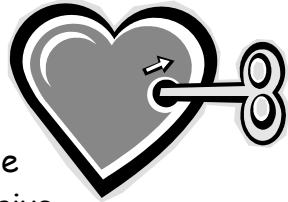


Therefore, we should choose to see some of the good qualities in our hateful ones. This will again help us to tolerate them better.

12. Remember the GOODNESS WITHIN us. We have the tendency to find fault with ourselves.

This is a form of nihilistic craving. The antidote to it is to do more good deeds and frequently rejoice on our meritorious actions. We are imperfect and it's perfectly perfect to be imperfect. Else, we would have been enlightened.

13. Have an OPEN HEART. Be compassionate. People who are nasty are basically people who are not happy. Forgive them for their ignorance in hurting you. They don't know of a better way to react. Help them by not getting upset with them and allow them time to heal.



14. Embrace UNCERTAINTY. The only thing that does not change in life is change itself. We should acquaint ourselves with change. It's good that things sometimes change and don't turn out exactly the way we plan for it. Else, life will be very boring.

15. Have a SILENT MIND. Sometimes not to actively think is the best way to deal with our problems in life. Just relax and let go! You may be surprise that wonderful ideas and solutions will blossom when we just DO NOTHING.

The above mentioned are the common Buddhist reflections that I used everyday to keep myself mentally healthy as much as possible. I hope they will be useful to you as well in time of stress. The following is a beautiful saying to end this topic and with the message, CHOOSE WHAT YOU THINK WISELY!

Sow a THOUGHT, Reap an ACTION
Sow an ACTION, Reap a HABIT
Sow a HABIT, Reap a CHARACTER
Sow a CHARACTER, Reap a DESTINY



GOOD MENTAL ATTITUDE



IT MAY BE TOO DIFFICULT TO DO GOOD;
IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO BE GOOD.
BUT TO MAINTAIN A GOOD MENTAL ATTITUDE
AND TO DO SOME SERVICE
TO OTHERS IN THE FACE OF ACCUSATION,
CRITICISM AND OBSTRUCTIONS IS
MOST DIFFICULT OF ALL

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

LETTING GO OF WORRY FOR HEALTH

There is this wonderful Buddhist story to illustrate that letting go of worry is good for health!



Once Nakulapita was seriously ill and his wife Nakulamata noticed that he was ANXIOUS and WORRIED. She advised him thus: "Please, sir, do not face death with anxiety. Painful is death for one who is anxious. The Buddha had looked down upon death with anxiety. It may be you are anxious that I will not be able to support the family after your death. Please do not think so. I am capable of spinning and weaving and I will be able to bring up the children even if you are no more alive. Perhaps you are worried that I will remarry after your death. Please do not think so. We both led pure wholesome lives according to the noble conduct of householders. So, do not entertain any anxiety on that account. It may be you are worried that I will neglect attending on the Buddha and the Sangha. Please do not think so. I will be more devoted to the Buddha and the Sangha after your death. Perhaps you are worried that I will neglect keeping to the precepts. Please do not have any doubts on that account. I am one of those who

fully practice the moral habits declared for the laity, and if you wish please ask the Buddha about this matter. Perhaps you fear that I have not gained inner mental composure. Please do not think so. I am one of those who have gained inner mental composure as much as a householder could gain. If you have any doubts about this, the Buddha is at Bhesakalavana, ask him. Perhaps it occurs to you that I have not attained proficiency in the Buddha's dispensation that I have not gone beyond doubt and perplexity without depending on another. If you wish to have these matters clarified ask the Buddha. But please do not face death with anxiety, for it is painful and censured by the Buddha."

It is reported that after Nakulapita was thus admonished by Nakulamata, he regained his health, and gone was that illness never to recur. Later on this whole incident was narrated to the Buddha, who commended Nakulamata for her sagacious advice.

IF YOU KNOW A PROBLEM CAN BE SOLVED,
WHY WORRY? IF YOU KNOW A PROBLEM CANNOT
BE SOLVED, WHY WORRY?

-Shantideva-

LIVING IN THE PRESENT MOMENT



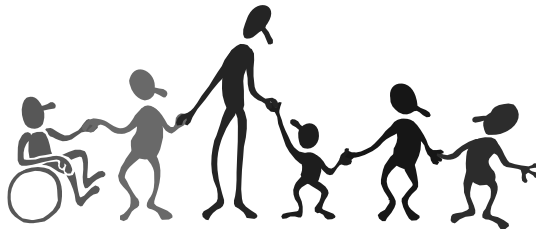
There is this beautiful story to illustrate the importance of living mindfully in the present moment as a way to promote mental health.

Once there was a poor man who while wandering through the forest discovered a dusty blue bottle. As he brushed it off, out pops a genie! The genie promised to fulfil as many wishes as the man could think of but with one condition. Should the man run out of wishes, the genie would devour him. The poor man agreed, figuring that he could easily occupy the genie. His first wish was for a meal. The genie produced it instantly - row after row of steaming delicacies. As the poor man gazed at all the food, he thought of servants to serve him. No sooner did this thought reached his consciousness than it is fulfilled. One wish followed another. Soon, he was in a beautiful mansion with a charming wife and wonderful children. With difficulty, they kept the genie busy. But, soon the man and his wife started to worry that they will run out of wishes.

The man remembered that a wise man lived in a hermitage about two hours distance. He and his wife hiked to the hermitage in hopes that the wise man would have a solution that will save them from the genie. Indeed, he did. He told the pair to erect a tall pole and tell the genie to keep busy by endlessly shining up and down the pole. If they needed anything, they could call him down for a moment.

The genie on the story is a metaphor for our minds. The minute the mind is not actively engaged, it threatens to eat us up with anxieties and negative fantasies. Shining up and down the pole is a metaphor for the mindful breathing process. If the mind is kept busy noticing the incoming and out going breath, then it has no chance to overcome us.

The most important TIME is *now*
The most important PEOPLE is
The people around us *now* and
The most important THING TO DO *now*
Is to CARE for the people around us *now*



HOW TO SLEEP WELL

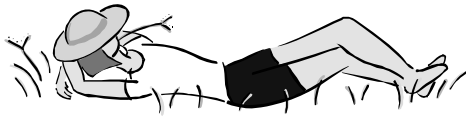
On one occasion, the Buddha was consulted by Hatthaka on how He could sleep so well despite in cold winter, thin robes and hard ground. The Buddha then prescribed 'three tablets of sleeping pills'. They are 1. Free from GREED. 2. Free from HATRED. 3. Free from DELUSION as summarised in the following verse:

THE BRAHMIN WHO IS QUENCHED WITHIN
ALWAYS SLEEP HAPPILY;
HE DOES NOT CLING TO SENSUAL DESIRES,
FREE FROM PROPS, ONE COOL IN MIND.
HAVING CUT ALL STRAPS OF ATTACHMENT,
REMOVED CARE DEEP WITHIN THE HEART,
THE PEACEFUL ONE SLEEPS HAPPILY
ATTAINED TO PERFECT PEACE OF MIND

-Angutara Nikaya-



LET GO TO SLEEP



THE BEST WAY TO
FALL ASLEEP WHEN
YOU CAN'T SLEEP IS
TO LET GO & STOP
TRYING TOO HARD TO SLEEP

-Ajahn Brahmavamso-

WHY WE SHOULD LAUGH

-By Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-



According to the old saying, *a smile is a little thing but it means so much*. This is a nice idea but does it have any substance to it? Recently, two scientists, Robert Levenson and Anna Ruef published the results of several years of research into smiling. Their findings make an interesting read. Externally, smile seems like a rather unremarkable behaviour. However, 15 facial muscles are required to form a smile, more than nearly any other simple human activity. A hearty laugh requires nearly twice as many facial, back and abdominal muscles and induce major changes in breathing, heart rate and hormonal activity, all of them healthful. It has also been discovered that by smiling, one should feel more positive. Exactly how this happens is still not clear but it is a measurable phenomenon. It is only one of the many mysteries surrounding the common smile. It has been well known for many years that emotions are contagious; we pick up other people's feelings and to some extent feel them ourselves. Watching or listening to two people arguing arouses negative

emotions in a third person. But now we know that smiling or laughing is twice as effective in influencing others as any other emotionally-induced behaviour. In a group situation, a smile is almost irresistible. It will make others in the group smile and therefore change the overall mood of the group, no matter how negative it might have been. Babies can smile within fifteen days of birth and it is thought that they do not do so earlier because their facial muscles are not yet sufficiently developed. About 74% of people who die from natural causes die with a smile on their face.

While all this is interesting, it is hardly surprising. During years of listening to and counselling people in distress, I have rarely come across a case that could not be solved or at least improved by the lightness and emotional release that often accompanies a smile, a chuckle or a laugh. A smile does not just have a positive effect on the person who does it; it can also have a therapeutic effect on those who see it. To show a slight smile while listening as someone recounts their predicament immediately tells them that they have a sympathetic friend listening to them and even this helps them feel better. To point out the funny side of their predicament and most problems do have a humorous element in them - can



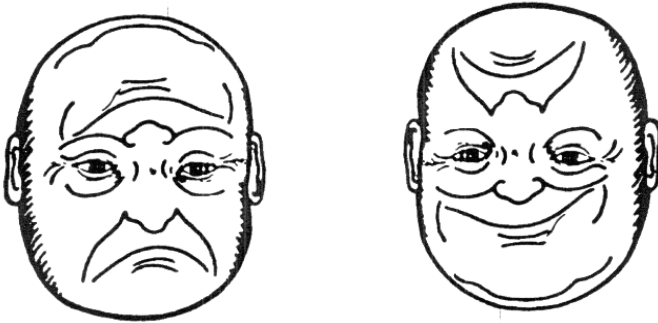
help them rise out of their fixed way of looking at it so that they can approach it from another perhaps more helpful angle. Laughing at a problem can also help a person to see that even if they are in difficulties, that they don't necessarily have to feel bad. But it is important to be sensitive if we introduce humour while someone is discussing his problem. We must not laugh at them. We must laugh with them. This further strengthens the connection and empathy between the helper and the one seeking help.

I feel that smiling and light-heartedness even has a spiritual dimension. I often find that when people become religious, they seem to lose their sense of humour. Somehow, religion transmits to them the idea that if they are religious, they must be stern, serious and unsmiling. I think this is an unfortunate misunderstanding. While religion is a serious matter, this doesn't mean that we can't be joyful, radiant and happy. And if we are like this, why shouldn't we smile and be cheerful? Sayings like *many a true word spoken in jest* suggests that more thoughtful people have long sensed that there is a sort of wisdom in light-heartedness. It is not surprising that the English word 'wit' has the double meaning of intelligence and humour. Far more



indicating superficiality or empty-headedness, a relaxed, easy and smiling approach to life and religion is much more likely to allow knowledge both to flow in and to radiate out. And of course, knowledge is the essence of religion.

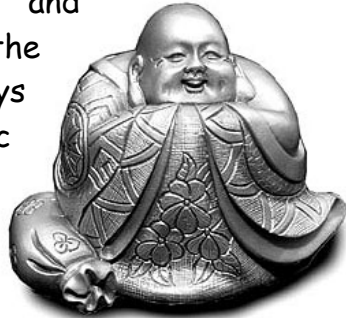
IT TAKES 72 MUCLES TO FROWN
& ONLY 15 MUSCLES TO SMILE



AND small CHANGES IN THE
WAY WE LOOK AT LIFE CAN
HAVE **BIG** OUTCOME!

LAUGHING BUDDHA

In Buddhism, everyone has the potential to become a Buddha as long as he is willing to practise the spiritual perfections leading to it. So, our Gautama Buddha is neither the first nor the last Buddha. According to Him, the next Buddha to come is known as Maitreya Buddha. He is often depicted in Chinese and Japanese art as that jolly fellow with the large belly. He is also popularly known as the Laughing Buddha to symbolise his virtue of loving-kindness, light-heartedness and friendliness. Looking at the Laughing Buddha image always reminds me of the therapeutic benefits of laughing. The following are the physical, mental and social health benefits of laughing that I have in mind so far.



1. Laughing involves at least 15 facial muscles. It is a good way to exercise the facial muscles, a cheaper and healthier way than chewing bubble gum.
2. Laughing reduces the risk of getting heart attack and stroke, and reduces blood sugar

level in diabetics. It also relieves allergic reactions.

3. Laughing induces the secretion of endorphin (I call it the Ha! Ha! neurochemical) from the brain into the body. It is a natural painkiller. It also gives the body a sense of joy and calmness.
4. Laughing reduces stress hormones and increases immune cells in the body. So, it strengthens the body's immune system.
5. Laughing and smiling enables us to break the ice and communicate effectively with others. This is very important in counselling and psychotherapy for therapeutic effect.

In Norman Cousins' 1979 bestseller, *Anatomy of an Illness*, the noted editor and writer described how, flat on his back in bed, he was able to belly laugh himself well by watching Marx Brothers movies and reading books of humor. Every ten minutes of genuine laughter, he said, "had an anesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep."

People tend to laugh spontaneously when they are happy. Interestingly, study has shown that the mechanical will and act to laugh can induce the

emotion of joy and happiness associated with it. In another words, we don't have to wait for happy moments to laugh. We can laugh to generate happy moments in life. Now I know the wisdom of my metta meditation teacher who advises me to deliberately put on a smile for effective cultivation of metta.

The white coat that I put on in hospital has an inverted smiley collar tag. My colleagues and patients would frequently say to me, "Eh Phang, your smiley tag is inverted!" I would then respond with a smile, "That's reverse psychology! Else, you won't pay any notice to it" And the person would be laughing and I have successfully transmitted the 'smile/laugh worm' to another human being.

When I attended to one of my patients in my hospital's emergency department one midnight, I was surprised to see a huge mirror placed on one of the walls. I found out later that it is a therapeutic mirror. Therapeutic for the doctors instead of the patients! It is specially designed for us doctors to look at ourselves and reflect, "How horrible I look like when I don't smile!" Looking at ourselves in this way frequently terrified us and motivates us to put on a smile before we attend to our patients. As for myself, I would also recite silently in my heart, "Oh Laughing

Buddha, may your blessings be upon me to heal my patients with the power of loving-kindness". As I leave my patients, I would then sing in my heart, "A smile is quite a funny thing, it lightens up your face....." to suffuse the hospital with the harmonic energy of loving-kindness.

In my observation, I discovered that there are two types of people who don't need much apparent reason to smile or laugh at. The first is those who are very contented. They have abundance of joy and are grateful with whatever that comes into their lives. This type of people is indeed very rare and they are the masters of the art of happiness. They are the living Laughing Buddhas and we can learn a lot from them.

HEALTH IS THE GREATEST GAIN
CONTENTMENT IS THE
GREATEST WEALTH

- Buddha -

Years ago when I was attending a Buddhist camp, I came across a brother who laughed very loudly and very easily over the slightest joke. His laughter threshold was certainly very low. When he laughed, we would all be stunned and then be laughing at the way

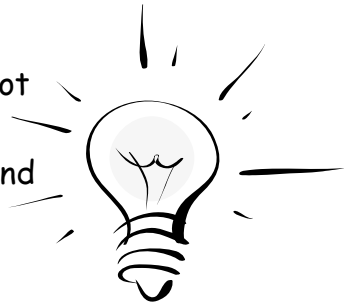
he laughed instead of the joke. Come to think of it, he was the most mentally healthy among us. I wonder where he is now and if were to meet him again, I would definitely attempt to study his art of exceptional spontaneous laughter.

The second type of people is more common at least from my point of view. I see them everyday in my psychiatric practice. They are the psychotic patients. They are the ones described as smiling and laughing inappropriately in our mental state examination. We can also learn them. If we cannot let go in life and take our problems too seriously, we may end up like them. I'm sure you wouldn't want that to happen. So, choose to laugh healthily at life instead of been laughed at by others as of in a psychotic person.

THE SYMPTOMS OF MADNESS IS FOUND IN EVERYONE

- Buddha -

OK! I know this article is not funny. But, you can still laugh. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Take care and have a beautiful laughing day.



LAUGHING AT YOURSELF

-Ajahn Brahmavamso-

One of the best pieces of advice I received as a young school teacher was that when you make a mistake and your class starts laughing, then you should laugh too. That way, your students are never laughing at you, but with you.

Many years later, as a teaching monk in Perth, I would be invited to high school to give a lesson on Buddhism. The teenage western school kids would often test me out by trying to embarrass me.

Once, when I asked for questions from the class, at the end of my description of Buddhist culture, a fourteen-year-old girl raised her hand and asked, "Do girls turn you on, then?"



Fortunately, the other girls in the class came to my rescue and scolded the young girl for embarrassing them all. As for me, I laughed and noted the incident down as material for my next talk.

On another occasion, I was walking along a main city street when some schoolgirls approached me. "Hi!" they said in the most friendly of manners, "Do you remember us? You came to give a talk at our school a short time ago".

"I am flattered that you remember me." I replied.

"We'll never forget you," said one of the girls, "How can we ever forget a monk named BRA!"



LIFE IS NOT THAT SERIOUS
LET'S TAKE HUMOUR MORE SERIOUSLY

MADNESS

Are you mad?

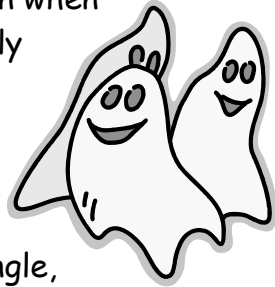


THE SYMPTOMS OF MADNESS
IS FOUND IN ALL
WORLDY BEINGS

-Buddha-

GHOST OR MENTAL ILLNESS

What is your first impression when you hear someone describes a family member in this manner?



"My son is 17 years old. He was well until after he came back from National Service in the jungle, whereby he started to behave in a very odd manner. He was withdrawn - reluctant to talk and hide himself in his room most of the time. He appeared very scared and said that he saw a shadow peeping at him. He also heard voices whispering to him and felt something entered his body to control him. Sometimes, he talked in a funny language not understood by us and made weird hand gestures....."

A lot of us will instantly come to the impression that the boy has been disturbed by ghost brought back from the jungle. Therefore, one will usually bring the boy to traditional healer or monks for blessing. If he recovered, then it is good. But, more often than not, they don't recover or have a second episode of possession. Then (after several visits), with the

advice from others as a last resort, the boy will be brought to a psychiatrist for treatment. The psychiatrist may then typically say, "Your son is suffering from Schizophrenia, a kind of mental disorder that is treatable. Don't worry, he is not possessed by ghost".

A common reaction from the family members will then be something like this, "How sure is he? He's a western doctor. He's not trained in 'ghost-busting'. I better accept what he says with a pinch of salt. Let's find another more powerful 'bomoh' to catch the ghost".

What is your opinion? From a Buddhist point of view, can one become sick because of disturbances from evil spirits? The answer is YES, although I think it is not common.

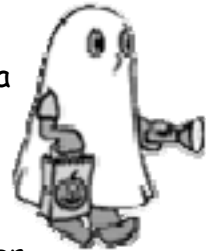


I once went to Penang to visit an elderly monk who is reputable in 'ghost-busting'. I was told that a lot of people with odd behaviour are brought to see him for spiritual treatment. The thing that strikes me the most is that he doesn't think that all people who behave oddly are been possessed by ghost. In fact, he could identify those with mental illness from those

with true possession. Those with mental illness, he will advise them to go to psychiatrist for treatment. And those who are possessed by ghost will receive 'specialist' spiritual treatment from him.

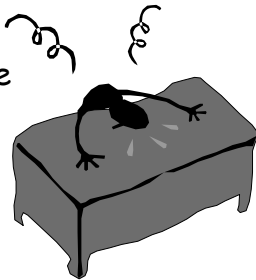
Naturally, one of the burning questions that I eagerly forwarded to him was, "How can you tell which is which". I hoped so much that he had patients on that day so that he could teach me his diagnostic skill. Unfortunately, he had no patients on that day and he could not describe to me how he does it. But, he welcomed me to see for myself whenever he has a patient as practical session. Too bad, I had to leave on that day and till now I have not had my practical session yet.

On another occasion, I was attending a meditation retreat under a reputable monk. During one of the nights in the retreat, one of the young temple devotees acted in a very weird way after listening to a Dharma talk. She was praying in an unusual way and talking irrationally. She was immediately brought to the attention of the monk and I was also called (even in retreat also has to be on call) to lend a hand. Surprisingly, without prompting, the monk said that she most probably had mental



illness rather than been possessed by ghost. Of course I agreed whole heartedly as that was my impression as well. So, we arranged for the friends to take her home and advise them to get her an appointment for psychiatric treatment. I also learned from the monk later that possession by ghost may happen, but mental illness is relatively much more common. I regret that I forgot to ask the monk on how to differentiate the two!

A few weeks later on a Wednesday afternoon, I was as usual in my clinic interviewing a patient. Half way through the conversation, I discovered that the patient was actually the lady whom I met at the temple previously during my retreat. What a karmic link! It was then confirmed that she has Schizophrenia and the mother is also a known case of Schizophrenia undergoing treatment. I prescribed her medication and her sickness is now under control and she is able to work.



It is interesting to note here that symptoms of Schizophrenia can be similar to those commonly described in possession. For instance, people suffering from Schizophrenia frequently have this symptom known

has 'Delusion of Control' whereby they feel a certain force entering their body to control their thought, speech and action. Sounds familiar?

So, back to the question, "How can we tell whether a person is suffering from mental illness or ghost possession?" From a psychiatric point of view, ghost possession as a cause of mental illness is a straightforward non-sense! However, from a Psychiatric and Buddhist point of view, this can be a bit tricky and I have to sincerely declare that I don't really know the answer.



But, base on my experience and conclusion that mental illness is much more common than ghost possession, I will make sure that I don't miss the diagnosis of a mental illness which is treatable, whenever I see someone suspected of been possessed by ghost. As a complement to psychiatric medication, I will allow the patient to be seen by a traditional healer or monk for blessing, as long as it does not harm the patient or interfere with ongoing medications. By doing so, I feel that I'm doing justice to the patient by not mistreating the small percentage of true ghost possession.

MEDITATION & MENTAL ILLNESS

Meditation generally speaking is any form of activity that skilfully anchors our attention to the present moment. It has recently become a very popular practice especially among the westerners. More and more youngsters are also taking up meditation as a way of coping with stress in order to improve their quality of life. This trend is encouraging especially from a Buddhist point of view, as meditation is an essential part of Buddhist practice. Evidently, more and more people are practicing Buddhist teachings and gaining benefits. Having said this, there is however, widespread belief and fear that meditation is dangerous as it is said to be associated with mental disorder! Thus, a lot of people are frightened or apprehensive to take up meditation despite its manifold benefits.

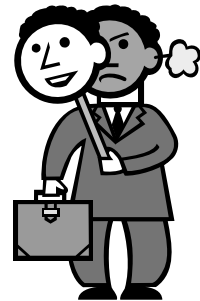


Meditation causes one to become mad! What's your opinion? Yes, no or maybe? I'm a Buddhist with some experience in meditation. I'm also

a medical doctor practicing in a psychiatric department. I would like to share my humble view on the issue above. To the best of my knowledge, there is no scientific evidence to suggest that meditation causes mental disorder. Why then do so many people swear that it does? The following are a few plausible explanations as to why it appears to be so.

Mental disorders are very common. Major Depression, the commonest mental disorder is as prevalent as about 1 in every 10 person in a population. Schizophrenia, the commonest severe mental disorder is as prevalent as 1 in every 100 person in a population. Just because a meditator suffers from a mental disorder, it doesn't mean that the cause of the mental disorder is meditation. For instance, just because a mentally disordered person prays to God, one cannot draw the conclusion that prayer causes mental disorder! Similarly, when a diabetic suffers a mental disorder it would be foolish to conclude that diabetes causes the mental disorder! In short, mental disorders are very common and can happen to meditator as well as non-meditator.

Mental disorders are usually precipitated by stress. A lot of people



only start to meditate after they encounter severe stress in life. This is not surprising at all since meditation is known to be a very good stress management tool. The first experience of the symptoms of mental disorder may sometimes be so frightening for the sufferers that he or she often turns to spirituality and meditation for solace. In these instances, spirituality and meditation are often the innocent scapegoats! In actual fact, the likely cause of the mental disorder is actually severe stress, and not meditation.

Many people have been diagnosed with a mental disorder long before they start to meditate. They would have already been started on psychiatric medications to control their disorder. However, some of them may forget to take, or run out of their medications during a long meditation retreat. Some might also choose not to take the medications as certain medications can cause drowsiness and interfere with meditation that requires concentration. This explains why some people get a relapse of the mental disorder and behave abnormally during meditation retreats. The actual cause of the relapse of the mental disorder is non-compliance to medications and NOT meditation per se.



People with mental disorders often suffer hallucinations. They see things that other people don't see and hear things that other people don't hear. Some meditation techniques involve active visualization and imagination. People suffering from mental disorders with a tendency to hallucinate might experience a relapse when doing such techniques, especially when the disorder is not well controlled with medications. So, the cause of the mental disorder is again not meditation. However, wrong techniques of meditation may precipitate an already existing mental disorder.

Anyone practising intensive meditation (continuously for hours, days, weeks or months) should always do it under the supervision of a well-trained meditation teacher. Similarly, anyone doing any intensive sports should do it under supervision as well. It is a known fact that wrong techniques in meditation, especially intensive meditation, may give rise to complications that may include symptoms of mental disorders. Nevertheless, meditation is still relatively very safe. Everything in life has its risks. For instance, jogging too can be dangerous if we don't do it correctly. We may sprain our ankles or trip and fall. A car may also knock us down. Does that mean that one should stop exercising just because of its



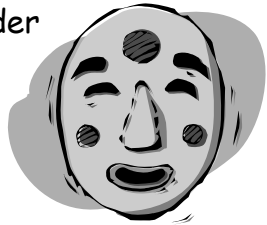
relatively insignificant risk especially when compared to its many benefits? The same principle applies to meditation, a mental exercise. It has a lot of benefits, and does not cause complications. But, wrong techniques may do so, just like physical exercise does.



Meditation has a lot of benefits with very good safety profile. Also, its association with mental disorder as a cause is certainly not true and in fact contradicts scientific evidence. Dr. Herbert Benson, a cardiologist from the Harvard Medical School has done extensive research on meditation for more than 30 years. In his book entitled, "Relaxation Response", he points out that meditation is very effective and safe in treating various types of stress related medical conditions. He says that throughout his experience, he has never come across any person who had gone mad due to meditation. I for one have seen hundreds of mentally disordered people in my practice and so far have only come across three patients who regularly meditate. The vast majority of others who suffer from mental disorders are non-meditators. This observation probably suggests that contrary to misleading popular belief, meditation confers mental health instead of causing mental disorders. After all, the Buddha says

that the symptoms of madness are found in everyone unless one is enlightened. And meditation IS the way to enlightenment. Therefore, meditation is a 'CURE' for 'mental disorders' and not a cause of it. Meditation is indeed very safe and certainly does not cause mental disorders. Extreme fear and belief that meditation causes mental disorders is in itself a symptom of mental disorders. It could be a *phobia*, which is psychopathologically defined as a marked, persistent, excessive, and unreasonable fear towards something. Thus, extreme fear of meditation is 'meditation phobia', a form of mental disorder. It could also be a *delusion*, defined as fixed, false belief despite evidence to the contrary. Hence, the unshakable belief that meditation causes mental disorders is a delusion, another classical symptom of mental disorders.

Should a person with a mental disorder meditate? I am of the opinion that there is no reason not to do so. However, when a person's mental state is not stable, seeing a psychiatrist for the appropriate treatment to be instituted is of prime importance. This is particularly so for psychoses (mental disorders in the psychotic spectrum), whereby a person would be unable to meditate. When the mental state has been



stabilized, then meditation can be an effective tool used to promote calmness, relaxation and peace. In this way, it complements pharmacological therapy and enhances the mind. It is of utmost importance that meditation should never be a substitute for psychiatric medications!

Does the type of meditation matter for people with mental disorders? People with mental disorders have the tendency to be easily restless, especially when the disorder is not in complete remission. In view of this, motion-type meditation (e.g. walking) might be more suitable than stationary-type meditation (e.g. sitting) for a start. Active visualization and imaginative type meditation might not be suitable for those with mental disorders with a tendency to hallucinate. This is because it might trigger hallucinations and thereby cause a relapse. In short, it is absolutely fine for people with mental disorders to meditate, but should always be done under close supervision of a meditation teacher, and after discussion with the psychiatrist.

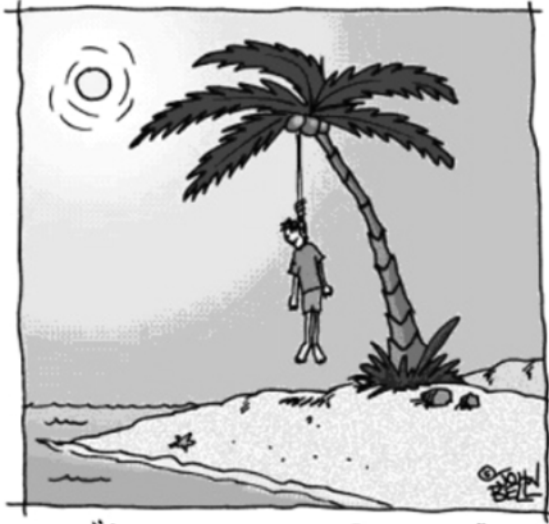
I suggest the following for those who are fearful that meditation is associated mental disorders but eager to try for relaxation, peace and healing.

1. Join a meditation group and practise under supervision. Meditating in a group is less fearful and more reassuring.
2. If you are doing intensive meditation, only do it under the supervision of a well-trained meditation teacher.
3. If you are doing brief meditation alone at home, make sure you acquire the correct techniques beforehand.
4. If you encounter any problems while doing meditation, always consult someone and ask for advice.
5. If you have a mental disorders, inform your meditation teacher and discuss this with your psychiatrist before meditating.

I would like to conclude this article by quoting what I have learnt from Ajahn Brahmavamso, an Australian Buddhist monk, meditation teacher and disciple of Ajahn Chah. When asked about the danger of meditation in one of his Dhamma talks, he said, "The only danger associated with meditation is when we don't meditate". I agree with him wholeheartedly. Meditation is beneficial, very safe, and DOES NOT cause mental disorders!



SUICIDE



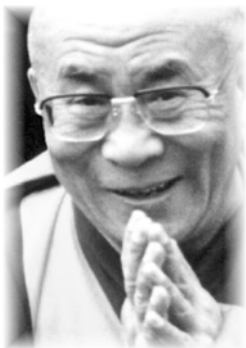
Suicide is now a leading cause of death. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about one million people died of suicide every year world wide. And for every suicide, there are 10 attempted suicides. In my psychiatric practice, I encounter many people with only suicidal thoughts but not plan or action. When asked why, one of the reasons they give is a spiritual one, "It's a SIN! It's against God!" This belief strongly anchors them to life despite that they actually don't feel that life is worth living. Buddhist doesn't believe in sin and God. Does that mean that Buddhism justify suicide?

No, Buddhism doesn't accept suicide. Suicide is considered as an unskillful way in responding to sufferings in life. It is also not acceptable based on the following reasons:

1. Pain and suffering in life is frequently caused by one's past bad karma. Suicide and death doesn't terminate the ripening of one's bad karma. Upon death from suicide, one may still be reborn again to pay the debts of one's bad karma.
2. In the first Noble Truth, the Buddha says that DEATH is suffering. He does not say that death is the end of suffering. Therefore suicide does not end suffering. In fact, as a form of nihilistic craving, it leads to more suffering. Only by the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path that one is able to effectively end one's suffering in life.
3. Committing suicide is considered as a major monastic offence and a monk/nun can be expelled from the Sangha because of this offence.

4. Committing suicide is considered as breaking the 1st precept of abstaining from killing or harming any sentient beings.
5. Dying from suicide is not a peaceful death. From a Buddhist perspective, a peaceful death is important for a good rebirth. Therefore, one who commits suicide may end up with an unfavourable birth with more suffering.

Having said that suicide is not acceptable in Buddhism, we should not despise those people who are contemplating on suicide. Instead, we should view them as someone suffering and calling for help. Out of compassion, we should extend our help to them as much as we can. This will help them to find a way out, reduce their suffering and avoid the act of committing suicide.



"Some people commit suicide. They seem to think that there is suffering simply because there is the human life and that by cutting off the life there will be nothing...but, according to the Buddhist viewpoint, that's not the case. Your consciousness will

continue. Even if you take your own life, this life, you will have to take another body that again will be the basis of suffering. If you really want to get rid of all your suffering, all the difficulties you experience in your life, you have to get rid of the fundamental cause (greed, hatred and delusion) that gives rise to the aggregates that are the basis of all suffering. Killing yourself isn't going to solve your problems!"

-His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama-



A PROBLEM IS SOMETHING
WITH A SOLUTION
IF THERE IS NO SOLUTION
THEN THERE IS NO PROBLEM

-Harold Macmillan-

SPIRITUAL HEALTH

It has been said earlier that the World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not just the mere absence of disease. In my humble opinion, this definition is good enough but not complete. There is a missing component of SPIRITUAL HEALTH that is not given enough emphasis.



Is a serial rapist healthy? Physically, he can have no sickness at all. Mentally, he may be diagnosed with Antisocial Personality Disorder but he does not have an actual psychiatric disorder like Schizophrenia, Major Depression or Anxiety Disorder. Socially, he is able to interact 'well' with others (most rape cases involve someone known to the victim). From the WHO definition of health, a rapist is basically a healthy person. We all know that this is not true but, we can't technically identify him as someone sick because of current WHO definition. Therefore, with this and others reasons I propose a wider WHO definition of health that includes spirituality.

For me, spiritual health should include these three aspects. In another word, a spiritually healthy person should:

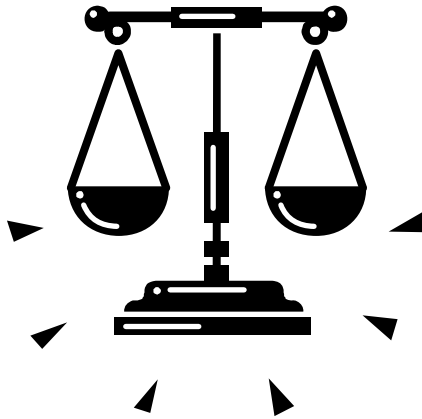
1. Have a sense of moral values
2. Have a sense of purpose in life
3. Have a sense that there is a greater being or force to guide us in life e.g. Triple Gem in Buddhism



With this more complete definition, then criminals can officially be considered as sick people. Why obsessed with classifying criminals as sick people? The reason is because we have the tendency to view their unwholesome actions e.g. stealing, murder, cheating, drug addiction etc. as crimes rather than sickness. Because of that, people are often just punished for their wrong actions instead of been rehabilitated. However, if we view them as sick people with spiritual sickness, then we will naturally be more compassionate to forgive, help and transform them to become healthier.

THE GREATEST MIRACLE IN LIFE
IS THE MIRACLE OF EDUCATION
& TRANSFORMATION

-Buddha-



ONE OF THE FAR-REACHING RESULTS
ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH OF FREUD
IS THE RECOGNITION THAT PEOPLE
WHO ARE COMPULSIVE CRIMINALS AND
DELINQUENTS ARE MENTALLY SICK,
WHO ARE MORE IN NEED OF
UNDERSTANDING AND TREATMENT
THAN CORRECTIVE PUNISHMENT

-Ven Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

Chapter 11



ADDICTION

THE PROBLEM OF DRUG ABUSE

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

During the early 1960s, the 'hippie' subculture swept the West making a deep impact on human civilization. A typical 'hippie' was seen as a young unkempt person wearing gaudy coloured casual clothes and long hair, advocating freedom of thought and expression, and rejecting many of the conservative standards values of society. Smoking cannabis (ganja) was their favourite form of drug abuse. Our local youth copied this lifestyle to a certain extent. Although with hindsight we can say that hippie movement did have some positive effect, its permissiveness paved the way for the greatest scourge mankind has ever known: drug abuse.



When drugs are abused, the results can be devastating - for the abuser, for those who care about him or her, and for society at large. Dependence on commonly abused drugs has become one of the leading public health problems. The escalating drug toll is quite unacceptable in terms of

wasted lives, destabilised families and rising crime rates, quite apart from the high cost of funding research programmes, rehabilitation centres and specialised law enforcement agencies. The severe harm addiction causes the human body and the difficulties of overcoming the problem are beyond doubt.

Repeating use of drugs can cause the user to become dependant on them. Physical dependence on a drug like heroine for example, is characterised by increasing tolerance to the drug - that is, the user has to take even larger doses in order to achieve the same degree of drug induced euphoria, or 'high'. And this of course makes the withdrawal symptoms, (the often severe physical reactions the user may experience when denied the drug) much worse. Traditionally, drug addiction has been defined as physical dependence. Today the term drug addiction usually refers to a behavioural pattern marked by compulsive use of a drug and preoccupation with getting it.



Drug abuse has been rated as one of the world's greatest enemies. Society has ascribed the cause of this scourge to the moral degradation of our youth who have strayed from their normal home

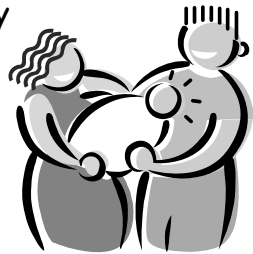
environment to be enticed by influences outside the home. Many use drug as a mean to escape from unhappy home situations. Parents who are too busy to attend to the social and spiritual needs of their adolescent children often neglect them to the extend of driving them to seek solace in drug addiction. The lack of proper parental guidance and supervision and the low regard for value of life, such as morality and spirituality has to a large extent contributed to this negative state of affairs. Many addicts began with no intention whatsoever of becoming addicted but they were sadly mistaken when they became enslaved to the habit.

It is significant to note that drug trafficking has surpassed international oil trading as a money spinner and is second only to the arms trade. The lucrative trade in drugs has made its distribution widespread and caused serious socio-economic problems in both developed and developing nations. Drug traffickers are in fact known to be using complex corporate structures and dealing in intricate business transactions involving banks, trust companies, financial institutions and real estate firms.



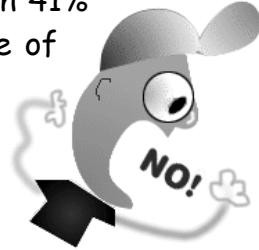
Drug abusers invariably progress on to hard drugs and 'mainliners' live under the perpetual threat of an overdose. The common habit of sharing needles to fix or inject drugs into one's body system by hard-core 'main-liners' is one of the principle causes of the spread of AIDS now threatening the country.

The government is currently spending millions of dollar on various drug rehabilitation programmes as the evil growing problem of drug abuse by our youth is increasing to alarming proportion.



It is significant to note that infants born to heroine addicted mothers also become addicts. Because the mother's heroine intoxication can penetrate the placenta barrier (the buffer between of her blood stream and that of the foetus) and pass directly on to the unborn child, doctors try to find out before hand if a mother is on heroine (many would not admit it) so that the child can be treated and handled as a addict from the moment it is born. If a doctor is unaware of the mother's addiction problem, the new born baby may go into an immediate and life threatening withdrawal state. This can include breathing problems, convulsion and trembling.

According to reports a vast majority (99.8%) of addicts are men, with more than 80% of them age between 20 and 39 years. More than 41% of addicts caught the habit because of peer pressure, 36.8% were seeking pleasure on their own initiative while 15.6% took drugs out of curiosity. Others became addicted to overcome mental stress (4.6%), as a result of medical treatment (1%), by accident (0.4%) and 0.1% as a sexual stimulant.



How can parents tell if their children in the adolescent age group (12-21 years) are on drugs? Millions of parents are quite rightly concerned about this problem and worry about the appeal of drugs to youngster. What they are obviously concerned about is illicit drug use. Your suspicion that one of your children is involved in drug taking may be aroused by an unexpected change in his or her behaviour pattern. He or she may appear confused, have slurred speech, become aggressive, paranoid or depress, suffer weight loss, display red eyes, drowsiness, reveal declining performance at school etc. If faced with irrefutable evidence, it is best not to over-dramatise the situation but to get the help of trained counsellors who will best know how to handle the

situation. The worse action would be to deny that problem exists.

One of the best ways to help your child avoid drugs is to set a responsible pattern at home - to not abuse potentially addictive products such as alcohol or tobacco yourself. If you find that your child is involved, do not confront him while he is affected. Instead approach him later and try to discuss the problem and any underlying adolescent difficulties that may relate to it.

There are two major aims to bear in mind:

to keep on good terms with the child who will often be the only person able to tell you what is going on, and to establish some firm facts about the drug use whether smoked, swallowed, injected or



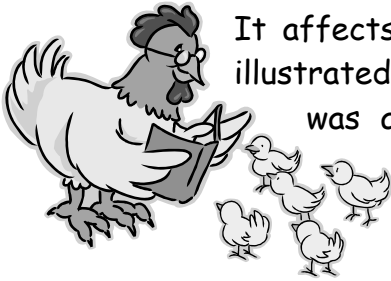
inhaled, also how long and how often it has been taken. You should then consult your family doctor who will advise you on the most sensible policy to adopt. If the situation is serious, your doctor may refer you to a rehabilitation centre or to a hospital.

ALCOHOL - THE BOTTLE GHOST

The 5th Precept in Buddhism concerns about mindful consumption. It includes abstaining from alcohol, drugs and anything that intoxicates the mind. Excessive alcohol consumption affects mental, physical and social health. The various medical conditions that can be contributed by it include the followings:

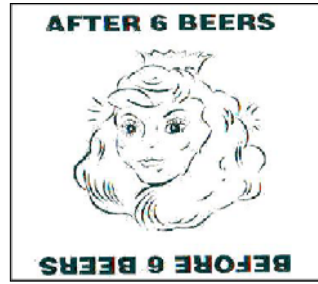
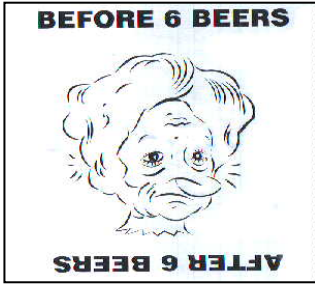
- Liver cirrhosis
- Pancreatitis
- Peptic Ulcer
- Cardiomyopathy
- Malnutrition and Anaemia
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Neuropathy
- Encephalopathy
- Epilepsy
- Dementia
- Depression
- Psychosis





It affects spiritual health as well as illustrated in this story. Once there was a layman who received the five precepts. At first they were very important to him and he strictly observed them. After some time, his old habits surfaced and he longed for a taste of wine. He thought, "Among the 5 precepts, the one against drinking is really unnecessary. What wrong with a little glass of wine?" So, he bought three pints of brandy and downed them. As he was drinking, the neighbour's little chicken ran into this house. "They have sent me a snack! I'll put this chicken on the menu to help send down my brandy", he thought. Then, he grabbed the bird and killed it. Then, the neighbour's daughter walked in and said, "Did you see my chicken?" Drunk as he was and full of chicken, he slurred, "No, I didn't see any chicken". Then, he took a licentious look at the girl who was pretty and ended up raping her.

Thus, a little drink of brandy led him to break all the other 4 precepts of killing, stealing, lying and sexual misconduct resulting in a lot of bad karma. Therefore, the precept against taking alcohol and intoxicants is very important for mental, physical, social and spiritual health.



ABSTAINING FROM ALCOHOL IS MENTALLY,
PHYSICALLY, SOCIALLY AND
SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY!

JUST A LITTLE DRINK



SOME PEOPLE EXCUSE A LITTLE DRINK OF
ALCOHOL AS BEING GOOD FOR ONE'S HEALTH
BUT RARE IS THAT PERSON WHO RESTS
CONTENT WITH JUST A LITTLE.

ONCE HOOKED, A PERSON NO LONGER
SEES THE DANGERS BUT DRINKS TO EXCESS.
WHEN ALCOHOL HAS CAUSED DISEASE AND
DEBILITATION AND BROUGHT ONE NEAR DEATH,
SUCH PERSON CANNOT STOP HIS CRAVING
AND HEEDLESS OF THE DOCTORS' WARNING,
WILL GIVE HIS LIFE FOR
JUST ANOTHER DRINK!

-Sayadaw Thabyekan-

THE DANGER OF SMOKING

-By Bro. Tan Teik Beng-



Throughout the discourses of the Buddha, there is no mention about smoking, although a great deal of advice was given on the dangers of alcohol consumption and drug-taking. I am not quite sure whether tobacco was known and cultivated during the Buddha's time more than 2500 years ago, but we can be definitely sure that no cigarettes, cigars, cheerots as we know them today, were on sale at that time. However, that does not mean that smoking is encouraged. Those who profess the Buddhist religion

and choose to live the Buddhist way of live should use their common sense and observe carefully what is happening around them concerning smoking. There is no denying the fact that smoking is a bad habit and excessive smoking has been proved to lead to a general deterioration of one's health and its consequent suffering, mentally and physically. Arogya parama labha - Health is the highest gain (Dhammapada verse No. 204). This is the good advice given by the Buddha, and as was his usual method of preaching, it is left to the followers to consider for themselves whether to accept or reject the advice, but they are solely responsible for their own consequences of their own chosen actions.

It has now been confirmed that excessive smoking does cause cancer and a host of respiratory and heart diseases. The Buddhist religion is sometimes described as a "Do it yourself religion", in the sense that the Buddha's teachings constitute only advice and not commandments. He gave freedom to the followers to use their intelligence to assess and analyse deeply his advice before deciding to follow them. Contrary to general belief, Buddhism is not a passive religion. As a matter of fact, in order to attain Nirvana, the ultimate goal of the religion, one has to be diligent and healthy in order to practise its

tenets. In fact, diligent effort occurs very frequently in the Discourses of the Buddha, which clearly indicates its extreme importance in the spiritual development of the Buddhists. Diligent effort is not possible for a person to exercise without good health. Hence, apart from other necessary measures to be taken in order to maintain good health, both mental and physical, smoking is to be discouraged, as it leads to deterioration of health and therefore renders one incapable of living an active and profitable life in accordance with the teachings of one's religion.

Very often, we hear of smokers saying that they have to smoke in order to relax and relieve their tension. What are the causes of tension? In Buddhism, it is taught that the real causes of tension lie, firstly in the anxiety we feel when something we value is threatened; secondly, in the resentment we build up towards those who threaten our valued things and our self importance; and thirdly, in the need we feel constantly to assert ourselves. The more things we crave or desire the more vulnerable we make ourselves to the onset of anxiety. The main foundation of anxiety is our concern for our own well-being or for the well-being of our near and dear ones.



In Buddhist psychology, this concern arises from self-centred desire, which embraces not only avarice and stinginess but also less obvious forms. In the full course of his life, the average person meets with so many annoyances and frustrations, and so he build up an aversion towards the thing and people that seemingly causes them. The third of the basic mental causes of tension is the false need we feel constantly to assert ourselves, to gain and retain prestige, and to maintain a sense of self-importance even at the expense of self-deceit. In Buddhist psychology, it is called delusion, because the self we constantly assert is unreal when understood in ultimate terms; and all tendencies towards self-assertion are all parts of this deep-rooted delusion. Thus we see that, according to the Buddha-doctrine, all mental unhappiness springs from self-centred desire, aversion and delusion. As we are considering them here as tension-causing factors, desire is expressed as anxiety, aversion is expressed as resentment and delusion as self-assertion.

Smoking is not the answer to the relieve of tensions. Buddhism offers, as an alternative, a practical system to bring about such relief. For bodily relaxation, we can adopt what is known as posture mindfulness. In this process, we adopt a comfortable posture, such as

lying down, and let our focus of consciousness move slowly several times from one side to the other across our forehead and eyebrows, keeping in mind the idea that we want the muscles concerned to relax or to become limp instead of tight. We can assist the effect by saying mentally "relax, relax" during the process. This is then continued for the rest of the body.



For mental relaxation, Buddhism recommends the method called Samatha Bhavana, or tranquil meditation. For this type of meditation, Buddhist usually choose for their objects of meditation, the serene image of the Buddha, his noble virtues or loving kindness towards all living beings. Then they are smokers who are fond of saying than smoking helps them to concentrate on their work. I do not know what psychologist have to say on this belief of such smokers. Here again, tranquil meditation if properly practised under a qualified meditation teacher over a period of time, does improve one's concentration power. It also helps to enhance one's tranquillity and happiness to a high level. In the Parabhava Sutta, it is mentioned that one of the causes of a man's downfall is the dissipation of his

wealth. While a person who is addicted to smoking may not dissipate a considerable amount of his wealth or possession, nevertheless it involves a loss of money which could be put to a more meaningful and profitable use, e.g. to provide better education for his children. Hence, we can see that although the various Discourses of the Buddha do not directly touch on the ill effects of smoking, in an indirect manner, they do exhort the followers to cultivate good virtues and morals that in turn enable them to realize the dangers and disadvantages of smoking.

A large number of smokers defend their habit of smoking by asserting that it is just one of the simple pleasures of life for them to enjoy. This type of pleasure cannot be said to derive from the indulgence of the senses organs, although some pipe smokers enjoy the aroma that assails their noses when they smoke a pipe using an expensive brand of tobacco. Some smokers enjoy the taste of tobacco in their mouths. In actual fact, the pleasure that them seem to enjoy exists only in their mind. But can we say that it is morally or spiritually wrong to smoke? From the Buddhist point of view, the three main factors that are



responsible for mind pollution or mental defilement are craving, anger or hatred, and delusion. Can craving for a smoke be considered a kind of mental defilement? In a way, I would say yes, although it would not constitute an unwholesome action or karma. But as I said at the beginning, Buddhist should approach this problem with common sense. However, we may also ask ourselves this question: "Is it worthwhile paying the high price of ill-health and financial loss merely to enjoy a simple pleasure of life?"



Smokers - burn RM 472, 000 a day. If the people stopped smoking, money saved would build in five years a Penang Bridge. (The Star).

This paper was presented by Bro. Tan Teik Beng at the National Seminar on "Action on Smoking or Health: Cultural and Religious Aspects of Smoking", organised by the Malaysian Medical Association.

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON BUDDHISM AND TOBACCO CONTROL



An International Workshop on Buddhism and Tobacco Control, held from 7-9 May 2002 at The Buddhist Institute of Cambodia, brought together 22 Buddhist monks and government Buddhist representatives from Cambodia, Thailand and Sri Lanka. Health professionals, tobacco control activists and observers were also invited and welcomed to the workshop. The workshop was organized by the Ministry of Cults and Religion, Cambodia and ADRA Cambodia.

The main objective of the workshop was to meet and discuss among local and international Buddhist monks and government representatives about how Buddhist teachings relate to tobacco and tobacco use, and the role that Buddhist monks can have in reducing tobacco use.

After two days of active discussion, the workshop participants agree and declare that:

1. There are many Buddhist teachings that relate to how Buddhist monks and others should behave. These include precepts about good and bad behavior, addiction, intoxication and harm to self and others.

2. Tobacco should be classified under the fifth precept, "Suramerayamajjahpamatthana", as a harmful and addictive substance.

3. Offering tobacco to monks should be considered to be in the third category of wrong offerings "majjadana". Buddhist monks: a) Have a religious right to refuse offerings of harmful substances such as tobacco. b) Need to educate Buddhists not to offer tobacco to monks.

4. Cigarette advertising is misleading, as it glamorizes and promotes tobacco use without informing the public about the extent of its harmful and addictive nature. This is offensive and violates the fourth precept of Buddhism, "Musavadaveramoni" about misleading communication. All tobacco marketing should be banned.

5. Tobacco contains addictive and poisonous substances, so tobacco business comes under the five wrong businesses, including

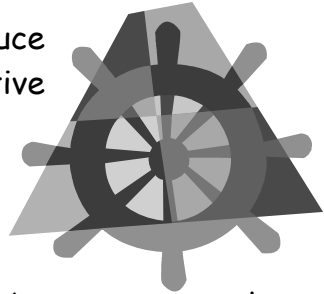


"Majjavanijsa" and "Visavanijsa".

6. Monks, who are of the highest moral standing should be free of nicotine addiction and therefore should not use tobacco. Furthermore, monks should be active in saving lives by preventing tobacco use, establishing smoke-free areas and helping people quit. This is the application of the Buddhist precept "Sangaha dhamma".

7. Tobacco use contributes to poverty through its detrimental impact on population health, the national economy and individual family wealth. Therefore, tobacco use reduction should be a priority in poverty reduction strategies.

8. Efforts by monks to reduce tobacco use will be more effective through participation and commitment from all levels of monks within the individual countries and cooperation at a regional level. This first meeting between three Buddhist countries should be followed by further meetings between more Buddhist countries to discuss the issue of tobacco use reduction.



SMOKING & 5 PRECEPTS

When we smoke, we are not seriously observing the 5 Precepts - the fundamental code of Buddhist ethics. We put ourselves at high risk of breaking the precepts. When we smoke, we.....

1. Harm and kill other people e.g. precipitate an asthmatic attack and cause lung cancer in others. Study in Harvard Medical School shows that second-hand smoke is dangerous as well. There are about 4000 chemicals in a cigarette, 200 are poisonous and more than 40 are cancerous.

2. Take what is not given to us willingly e.g. deprive others of fresh air, comfort and healthy environment.

3. Pollute our speech with bad breath, stained teeth, and possibility of gum disease and mouth cancer. We would also probably lie and try to hide our fault if asked about our smoking habit.



4. Addicted to nicotine and that would affect the functioning of the brain and mind. Study has also shown that 99% of inmates at drug rehabilitation centres in Malaysia are smokers. Smoking and drug (heroin) addiction are closely related.

What about the 3rd Precept?

People who are addicted to smoking would often abuse alcohol as well as both substances are addictive. Smoking and alcohol drinking are basically avoidant behaviour that people indulge in to cope with stress. It 'pseudo-works' by dulling our senses and emotions. When we are drunk and addicted, we become much more prone to break the precept of sexual misconduct. On top of that, smoking also causes sexual dysfunction and that can predispose to marital disharmony.



Say "TAK-NAK" to smoking!

BUDDHIST WARNING FOR CIGARETTE PACKETS

BANGKOK, Thailand, 18th
December, 2004 - Cigarette
packets across the world
generally contain the same set of

warnings, cautioning smokers that cigarettes can pose serious health risks. But cigarette packets sold in Thailand could soon be printed with a uniquely Buddhist message: **DON'T DONATE TO MONKS!**



Dr. Chakratham Thammasak, director of the National Buddhism Office, said today that he would propose to the government that temples were added to the government's list of smoke-free zones, which already includes hair salons, restaurants and department stores.

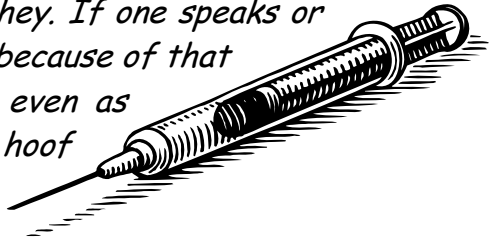
He also urged the public not to donate cigarettes to monks before the ban came into force, and said that he would propose that the Ministry of Public Health print the message: **'DONATING CIGARETTES TO MONKS IS A SIN'** on cigarette packets, while encouraging monks addicted to smoking to enter free rehabilitation programmes.

DRUGS AS MIND ALTERING AGENTS

A Buddhist perspective on drugs abuse
-Lim Kooi Fong-

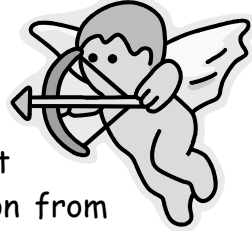
The mind is placed with high regards in the Buddha's teachings (Buddha Dhamma). Indeed, the first verse from the Dhammapada (the Way of Dhamma) is dedicated to the mind, which reads,

"Mind is the forerunner of all (evil) states. Mind is chief; mind made are they. If one speaks or acts with wicked mind, because of that suffering follows one, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught ox."



One could even say that some of the Buddha's most important teachings are centred on efforts to purify the mind. When the mind is calm and pure, likewise our life will reflect as such. When the mind is mentally soiled and immoral, our actions will also be mirrored likewise. According to the Buddha's teachings, since all our actions and results of those actions (volition) are mind made, we therefore need to safeguard the mind as though it is the most precious thing in the world.

The Buddha's teachings further states that since all actions and volition are interconnected, creating new results along the way (one thing leading to another i.e. dependant origination - *paticcasammupada*), we therefore need to be mindful of how we behave, and think. Like an arrow released by an archer, a wrong word said, or a punch released, cannot be retrieved. The result would mean some form of retaliation from the abused person, and the effect would come later or immediately. In other words, if we do not wish to get negative retribution, we need to be in control of our speech, physical action and thoughts. And to do that, we need to be "mindful" on how we behave.



To be mindful means to be aware of our speech, action and thoughts. Therefore, when we are mindful, we are in control of our speech, behavior and thoughts. Such a mind is necessarily moral. In such a state of mind, we know somehow what exactly we say and do, so as not to invite retributive and negative reactions. One can even said such a mind leads to progressive interaction, as it builds trust and fellowship amongst those whom such a person mingles with.

Drugs as antithesis to mental health



Given the basis that a healthy mind leads one to live a healthy life, the abuse of drugs therefore should be seen as the greatest enemy to the moral equilibrium of mental well-being. The last of the five precepts (*panca sila*) teaches us to:

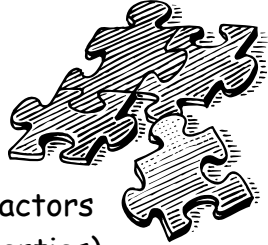
"Undertake the training to abstain from taking liquor, wine, strong drinks and that which causes intoxication (so that) I/we will be more healthy and mindful" (Sura meraya majjapama dathana veramani sikhapadami samadiyami).

The key term in the modern reference of this precept (which refers to the abuse of [any] substance) is contained in the part of the statement which says "... to abstain from taking.....*that* which causes intoxication". What is referred here is a general reference to ALL mind altering substances, regardless of its nature and composition; whether it is currently available or not yet being discovered by modern science.

The crucial element to consider here is that drug abuse will invariably lead to a deterioration of the state of mind, and thereafter affect one's speech,

action and mental well being. In turn, due to the imbalance mental state, one becomes a liability to society. But how does a person's mind get altered by substance abuse?

Components of the mind



According to Buddha's teaching, the mind is made up of mental factors called "*cetasikas*" (mental properties).

These mental properties are prerequisites for the arising of consciousness. In the *Abhidhamma* (Higher Teachings), the Buddha taught that altogether, these are 52 different kind of mental properties, which can be grouped in seven categories. Amongst the 52 mental factors are:

1. *neutral elements* (13 components) e.g. feelings, perception, attention, effort, interest etc.,
2. *unwholesome mental factors* (*akusala cetasika* -14 components) e.g. dullness, lack of moral shame, restlessness, greed, hate envy etc. and
3. *wholesome mental factors* (*kusala cetasika* - 13 components) e.g. faith, mindfulness, prudence, composure etc.

The neutral elements can be considered as the base soil or foundation & by themselves are neither moral nor immoral. Whereas the unwholesome mental factors are immoral seeds (leading to fruition of negative results) & the wholesome mental factors are moral seeds (leading to fruition of positive results).

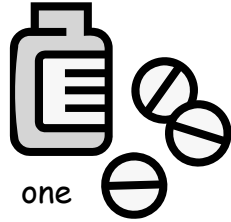
How drugs alter the state of consciousness

Without going into details, it is suffice to say that the working of the mind requires the mixing and interplay of all these factors. In short, how these elements interplay with one another shall determine the state and quality of consciousness present.

For instance, when the neutral elements mix with the unwholesome mental factors, then *an unwholesome state of consciousness (akusala citta)* arises. When the neutral elements mix with the wholesome mental factors, a *wholesome state of consciousness (kusala citta)* arises. As far as taking drugs is concerned, the substance abuser is actually contaminating his neutral mental factors with unwholesome mental factors.

Let's take an example. When one faces a depression, and resorts to taking ecstasy pill while dancing in a disco joint, he has actually succumbed to the unwholesome mental elements such as worry

(*kukkucca*), recklessness (*anottapa*), wrong views (*ditthi*) and confusion (*vicikiccha*). Instead of confronting what ever problems he has through invoking the wholesome mental factors, he decides to escape into an illusionary world by distorting the neutral mental elements. When the ecstasy pill is consumed, and as the chemical effects slowly diffuses into the body system, *neutral mental factors* such as feelings (*vedana*) and perception (*sanna*) are dulled. The one pointedness of mind (*ekagata*) goes missing, and other critical components such as vitality of life and wise attention (*manasikara*) diminishes. As a result, the mind becomes dull (*moha*), reckless (*anottapa*) and distracted (*uddhacca*). At this stage, we can say that the person's state of consciousness is unwholesome. Accompanying this state of consciousness is the inability of the person to have self control, low level of awareness, unmindful of what he says or does and basically, irrational. He could even indulge himself in damaging activities without realizing it.



Towards a drugs free and healthy life

By understanding how the mind works, it is clear that a balanced and composed mental life is prerequisite to a full and healthy life. With a mind grounded in moral

values, self control and mindful, positive and constructive actions will be produced. When one is able to behave like this, then the family, and the surrounding community benefits from the behavior of such an individual.

In the *Parabhava Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipata*, the Buddha says, "To be a womanizer, a drunkard, a gambler and to squander all one earns - this is the cause of one's downfall". And when one refrains from partaking negative substances, one's blessing increases, as indicated in the *Mangala Sutta* (also from *Sutta Nipata*): "Dispersion towards and refraining from evil, self control towards intoxicating drinks, diligence in the Teachings, this is the highest blessing."



A drugs free lifestyle is therefore a morally upright way of living. And to cultivate such a lifestyle, one needs to understand how to cultivate the wholesome mental factors, while being mindful of all other mental element which governs our entire being. The more one understand these elements, the more one appreciates the wonderful faculties one is naturally endowed with. By being so, one then will regard the purity of the mind as sacred and therefore will do anything to keep it from uncontaminated.

Chapter 12



MISCELLANEOUS

SHAOLIN KUNG FU

-By Sijo Robert Z-

The Establishment of SHAOLIN

Toward the end of the
5th Century AD, an
Indian Buddhist monk

by the name of Ba Tuo was

traveling through China teaching Buddhism, helping
and guiding. His great wisdom and kindness came to
the ears of the Emperor who summoned Ba Tuo to
come to him.



Exact details of what happened at this meeting is not
entirely clear but it seems that Ba Tuo was offered a
place in the palace and riches, and encouraged to
continue his teachings. Ba Tuo kindly declined this
offer and asked for a piece of land far away from any
'civilised place' in the province of Henan on the side
of the Song Sang Mountain. There he was given a
large piece of land and resources to build a monastery
in an area called 'Wooded Hill' or 'Small Forest' which
translates to Shaolin in Mandarin or Sil-Lum in
Cantonese.

Introduction of Physical Exercise

In about 539 AD, a holy man named Bodhidharma (later called Ta Mo by the Chinese) left his monastery in Southern India to spread the Buddhist faith to China, later called Ch'an Buddhism. (Ch'an is the Chinese translation for the Sanskrit word "dhyana" meaning Yogic concentration, also known as Zen in Japanese to where it migrated from China.). After traveling hundreds of miles to reach Northern China and crossing the Himalayan mountains and the Yangtze River, he headed North to Loyang, the capital of Henan Province.

There of course he found the Shaolin Ssu (Temple). It was 40 years after its founding, and had become famous for scholarly translations of Indian Buddhist scripture into Chinese. Bodhidharma sought entrance to Shaolin but the abbot of the day, Fang Chang would not let him into the temple (as many sought entrance for various reasons).

Bodhidharma was determined to enter and see the Shaolin Ssu. He located a nearby cave at the side of a mountain (this cave can be visited when one is in Henan/ShaoLin as well as climbing to the top where a forty foot Buddha statue is erected in honour of Ta Mo), where it is said that he sat in meditation facing a

stonewall. From this event many versions exist including:

- That he sat facing a wall for most of the next nine years, at the end of which Bodhidharma deep blue piercing eyes had apparently drilled a gaping hole in the cliff wall (we did not find such a hole but we did find what seemed to be a permanent shadow).
- That he fell asleep meditating and his eyelids closed and when he awoke, he was so distraught that he cut off his eye lids so that this would not happen again (but this would be against Buddhist teaching and he was a devotee Buddhist!).
- That he was visited by monks (initially secretly as they were interested in the 'foreigner') and was even supplied with food and water and that he in this way was able to demonstrate his knowledge and skill of Buddhism to such a degree that he was finally (after 9 years?) admitted into the temple.

Irrespective of which stories were true, it is clear that Fang Chang at some time relented and allowed Bodhidharma entry into the temple Shaolin. Upon

gaining entrance to Shaolin, Ta Mo (as he was now called by the Chinese) saw that the MONKS WERE WEAK AND COULD NOT PERFORM THE RIGOROUS MEDITATIONS HE EXPECTED THAT BUDDHIST MONKS SHOULD BE PRACTICING. Whilst meditating, they often fell asleep or were very restless and were not achieving inner calm or peace (which is required to reach Enlightenment, that for which all Buddhist strive!).

He spent some time in seclusion pondering the problem. Considering the time and health awareness at the time, TA MO CAME TO A STAGGERINGLY ACCURATE CONCLUSION THAT THE MONKS WERE NOT FIT TO MEDITATE. With this in mind he started working on a solution; he created three treaties of exercises.

These in-place exercises were later transcribed by monks as:

- a. *"The Muscle Change Classic" or "The Change of the Sinews,"*
- b. *"The Marrow Washing"*
- c. *"The Eighteen Hand Movements later named The Eighteen Lohan Shou (Lohan meaning enlightened)"*

and marked the beginning of Shaolin Temple Kung Fu (meaning hard work and perfection). Ta Mo later devised some self-defence movements based on his knowledge of Indian fighting systems (Bodhidharma was born an Indian Prince and was well versed in Yoga and Indian Kung Fu).

Shaolin Kung Fu

Many of the Shaolin priests were retired soldiers and generals. Thus, Ta Mo's teachings were enriched and refined by these martial art masters and thus it slowly developed into a martial art of the hands also known as Shaolin Ch'uan (Shaolin Fist) or Shaolin Ch'uan Fa (Way of the Shaolin Fist).

Shaolin was not a poor temple by this time and was regularly attacked by peasant armies (since individuals had no chance to penetrate Shaolin defences and walls). Often to enrich its knowledge, Shaolin would invite wandering healers, scholars and now also martial art masters into its walls to learn from these by sharing knowledge and skills!

Shaolin became very apt at kung fu and in repelling the attacking bandits. And slowly but surely, the Shaolin became renown for their martial arts prowess and fighting ability. It is to be noted that not all

Shaolin Monks were warrior monks but that monks choose to specialise in areas of expertise, much like university professors. Although at this time all practiced kung fu, not all were totally focused on the practical aspect of the art, only the Warrior Monks. It is also interesting to note that Shaolin preferred not to hurt their assailants as this would have ramifications for their spirituality in this life and the next!




THOUGH ONE MAY CONQUER A
THOUSAND TIMES A THOUSAND MEN IN BATTLE,
YET HE INDEED IS THE NOBLEST VICTOR WHO
CONQUERS HIMSELF

-Dhammapada vs 103-

HUMAN CLONING

What is reproductive cloning?

a  Reproductive cloning means making genetic copy or duplicate of an existing person. It is based on a technology called somatic cell nuclear transfer. It would be done by taking the nucleus from a cell in an existing person, putting it into an egg whose nucleus has been removed, and implanting that clonal embryo into a woman's womb to be brought to term. The baby, and later the child and adult, would be the genetic duplicate of the person from whom the original cell nucleus was taken. A person created in this way would not have a genetic mother or father, as we understand those words, but instead a "nuclear donor."

What is therapeutic cloning?

Therapeutic cloning is similar to reproductive cloning. But, instead of being implanted in a woman's womb to become a child ("reproductive" cloning), they would be used at the earliest embryonic stages e.g. blastocyst

to harvest cells (stem cells) that could be used for research towards medical therapies. Cells from the blastocyst are isolated and used to develop new stem cell lines. These cells are pluripotent, meaning that they can give rise to many types of specialized cells in the body and can be used to replace cells or tissues that have been damaged or destroyed.

The reason therapeutic cloning is being used to obtain stem cells is to address the vital issue of tissue incompatibility and possible rejection in organ/tissue donation. In therapeutic cloning, the somatic cell is removed from the patient expected to receive the transplant and fused to the donor egg. Because the majority of genetic information is contained in the nucleus, the stem cells that are derived from this procedure would be genetically compatible with the patient and would overcome the issue of rejection.

What is the Buddhist view on cloning?

Buddhism has no objection to the use of any form of technology as long as it does no harm and can contribute to the happiness of mankind. The INTENTION of doing anything in Buddhism is very important and which determines whether something should be supported or otherwise. Therefore, if

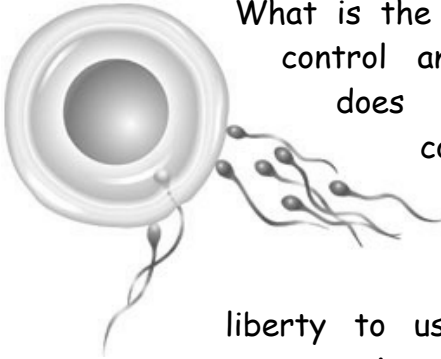
reproductive cloning is done with a wholesome intention e.g. to help infertile couples to conceive after failure of all other fertility techniques, then there is no reason for us to object to it. On the other hand, if it is done with unwholesome intention e.g. to make human clones for slavery, prostitution or sale to harvest organs, then definitely it should not be supported.

As for therapeutic cloning, Buddhism does not support it as it involves killing. When stem cells are extracted from an embryo for therapeutic purpose, the embryo with a life would inevitably be destroyed. However, if technology can one day advance to the extent that we can extract stem cells from an embryo for therapeutic purpose without destroying the embryo, then there is no reason for us not to support the technology.

LIKE MOST TECHNOLOGY AND
SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS, IT IS A DOUBLE-
EDGED SWORD, IT CAN PRODUCE GOOD AS
WELL AS HARM TO HUMAN BEINGS

-Ven. Dr. Mettanando-
(Genetic Engineering, Human Cloning & Karma -
Global Conference on Buddhism 2002)

BIRTH CONTROL & ABORTION



What is the Buddhist view on birth control and abortion? Buddhism does not oppose to birth control that may help to reduce some medical and social problems. As Buddhist, we are at liberty to use or not to use any contraceptive methods e.g. rhythm method, condom, vaginal diaphragm, pills, injection, implantation, surgery etc. These methods generally work by interfering with conception (conception) of sperm and ovum. A life therefore has not come into being yet and killing is not involved. However, we need to be cautious of birth control methods that interfere with pregnancy at any point beyond conception e.g. intrauterine device (IUD) that interferes with implantation of embryo on the uterus. This is because life may already been formed and killing is involved which is not supported in Buddhism.

Abortion is defined as the deliberate termination of pregnancy resulting in the intentional death of the embryo/foetus prior to normal or spontaneous delivery. It is basically killing and not justifiable as a

complete being has already been formed. There is some minor controversy over when a complete being with mind and body is actually formed during the embryonic development, although generally it is accepted that it happens during the conception itself. Some people might use this controversy to justify abortion, arguing that a complete being may not be formed yet at the point of abortion. But, even though that a complete being may only be formed at a later stage of pregnancy, nobody can be certain on the exact period when this occurs. Therefore, abortion is still not justifiable as we can never be sure of whether a being has already been formed, and we are putting ourselves at risk of killing and generating bad karma.



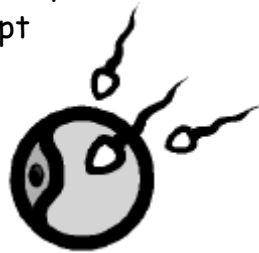
How about abortion under certain conditions? The Malaysian law only allows abortion (therapeutic abortion) when the continuation of a pregnancy significantly endangers a pregnant woman's physical or mental health. A typical scenario is one whereby a mother with a medical condition that will worsen and kill her if she continued with her pregnancy. What should a Buddhist do under such situation? Abort and kill the baby? Continue with the

pregnancy and risk your life? There will surely be a lot of considerations. But, one should not worry too much about the bad karma resulting from killing in this circumstance. No matter what decision is made and who dies, the intention to kill and therefore bad karma is generally insignificant. Instead of ruminating over guilt, one should focus more on one's spiritual cultivation to attain enlightenment. This ensures that we will never to be reborn again and able to escape such 'samsaric dilemma' in the future. If the option of therapeutic abortion is chosen, one should be wise to practice birth control after that to prevent such situation from happening again.

Although therapeutic abortion is legally allowed and spiritually acceptable, it should only be strictly carried out as a last resort. I once encountered a HIV positive teenage girl who was referred to me by the O&G Department. She had been raped and she was requesting a therapeutic abortion on ground of the risk of psychiatric morbidity in her and HIV transmission to the baby. We (Department of Psychiatry & Mental health) rejected the request based on the fact that she was actually mentally healthy and the risk of HIV transmission through pregnancy after medical intervention is very low. I'm glad that my department did not hastily approve the

abortion and I didn't have to sacrifice my Buddhist principles.

We are located just very near to Thailand. The Thailand law allows abortion in pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. I'm glad that we are not practising it in Malaysia, at least from a legal point of view. I once saw a 16 year old girl for counselling as she was raped by her boyfriend and was pregnant, and the family support was very poor. I was so proud of her that she did not illegally abort the innocent baby. With the help of the Medical Social & Welfare Department (MSWD), she was placed in a shelter home with other girls of similar fate. She then delivered her baby and was later adopted by a couple who is unable to conceive. I was later shock and happy to learn that there are actually many people on the waiting list to adopt unwanted babies. So, we should not dump or destroy unwanted babies as it is immoral to do so and they are many others who will cherish them. Of course, steps should also be taken to prevent rape, incest and unwanted pregnancy from happening e.g. education on respect, responsibility, safety, sexuality, contraception etc. rather than just dealing with complications which is very complex. Prevention is better than cure!



MATERNITY CARE

The Buddha has long emphasized on the importance of proper maternity care through the concept of GABBHA PARIHARA - protection of the foetus in order to ensure its healthy physical growth and development of the mind.

In this beautiful concept, mindful tendering of an expectant mother's spiritual needs is extremely important to ensure a successful childbirth. So, expectant mother should fortify herself spiritually by intensifying her religious practice e.g. reciting suttas, listening to Dharma talks and devotional songs, performing dana, observing precepts, meditation etc. She should also receive unconditional love and support from the husband and other family members. All these are to ensure that an expectant mother feels mentally, physically and spiritually healthy. This is of utmost importance as medical science has now conclusively shown that a mother's health will significantly influence the foetus's health.



A recent case of an American doctor who demonstrated the validity of the entrenched Buddhist practice of gabbha parihara with respect to the mental development of the foetus merits reference. He assembled a press conference to announce publicly that the baby his wife was about to give birth to would grow up to be a genius. He asserted his claim on the grounds that in addition to observing the Buddhist practice of gabbha parihara, he and his wife had read out aloud to their unborn child, facts, information and data on a whole range of subjects, throughout the wife's pregnancy. Just as the father had predicted, the child grew up to be a genius.

The doctor was keen to prove that the Buddhist principle of gabbha parihara pertaining to maternity care was scientifically well founded and that his son turning out to be a genius is not just a fluke. When his second child was about to be born, he again called for press conference to announce that his second child too would be a genius, because of the similar preparations he and the wife had taken as in the case of his first son. When the second child grew up, he too proved a genius like his brother. So, happy trying and may you make healthy, intelligent and wise babies!

THE MOON AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

The outstanding events in the life of the Buddha took place on full moon days.

Many people would like to know the religious significance of full moon and new moon days. To Buddhists, there is a special religious significance especially on full moon days because certain important and outstanding events connected with the life of Lord Buddha took place on full moon days. The Buddha was born on a full moon day. His renunciation took place on a full moon day. His Enlightenment, the delivery of His first sermon, His passing away into Nirvana and many other important events associated with His life span of eighty years, occurred on full moon days.



Buddhists all over the world have a high regard for full moon days. They celebrate this day with religious fervor by observing precepts, practicing meditation and by keeping away from the sensual worldly life. On this day they direct their attention to spiritual

development. Apart from Buddhists, it is understood that other coreligionists in Asia also believe that there is some religious significance related to the various phases of the moon. They also observe certain religious disciplines such as fasting and praying on full moon days.

The Ancients in India believed that the moon is the controller of the water, which, circulating through the universe, sustaining all living creatures, is the counterpart on earth of the liquor of heaven, 'amrta' the drink of the gods. Dew and rain become vegetable sap, sap becomes the milk of the cow, and the milk is then converted into blood -Amrta water, sap, milk and blood, represent but different states of the one elixir. The vessel or cup of this immortal fluid is the moon.

It is believed that the moon, like the other planets, exerts a considerable degree of influence on human beings. It has been observed that people suffering from MENTAL AILMENTS invariably have their passions and emotional feelings affected during full moon days. The word 'lunatic' derived from the word 'lunar' (or moon) is most significant and indicates very clearly our understanding of the influence of the moon on human life.

SOME PEOPLE, SUFFERING FROM VARIOUS FORMS OF ILLNESS INVARIABLY FIND THEIR SICKNESS AGGRAVATED DURING SUCH PERIODS. Researchers have found that certain phases of the moon not only affect humans and animals, but also influence plant life and other elements. Low-tides and high-tides are a direct result of the overpowering influence of the moon.

Our human body consists of about seventy percent liquid. It is accepted by physicians that our bodily fluids flow more freely at the time of full moon. People suffering from asthma, bronchitis and even certain skin diseases, find their ailments aggravated under the influence of the moon. More than five thousand years ago, people had recognised the influence of the moon on cultivation. Farmers were very particular about the effect of the moon on their crops. They knew that certain grains and paddy would be affected if flowering took place during a full moon period. Medical science has also ascertained the different reactions of certain medicines under different facets of the moon, because of the influence of the moon on human beings.

In view of the possible influence of the moon, the ancient sages advised people to refrain from various commitments on this particular day and take it easy

for the day. People are advised to relax their minds on this particular day and to devote their time to spiritual pursuits. All those who have developed their minds to a certain extent can achieve enlightenment since the brain is in an awakened state. Those who have not trained their minds through religious discipline are liable to be subjected to the strong influence of the moon. The Buddha attained His Enlightenment on a full moon day for He had been developing and attuning it correctly for a long period.

In days gone by, full moon and new moon days were declared public holidays in many Buddhist countries and people were encouraged to devote their time to spiritual development. It was only during the colonial period that holidays were switched over to Sundays. In view of this, some Buddhist countries are now trying to re-introduce the former lunar system of holidays. It is advisable to observe full moon day as a religious day to concentrate on peace and happiness by calming down the senses. Many Buddhists observe the eight precepts on full moon days, to be free from various commitments and to keep away from worldly pleasures in order to have peace of mind for their spiritual development. The effect of the moon on life and earth has been analyzed scientifically.

One writer says: 'I have been reading an article in an American science magazine recently where the writer brings together the present research on the subject of the moon to prove how decisively this age old object of the skies influences our lives, particularly at each of the four phases it passes through in its 28-day cycle.'

This research, by the way, was done at the American Universities of Yale, Duke and Northwestern and they have independently come up with the astonishing evidence that the moon plays a big part in our daily life and indeed, in the lives of all living things.

We are assured that there is nothing very occult in this phenomenon but that the phases of the moon do in fact stimulate various bodily actions like modifying metabolism, electrical charges and blood acidity.

One of the key experiments performed to establish this fact was on fiddler crabs, mice and some plants. They were all placed in chambers where weather conditions could not affect them, but were subjected to air pressure, humidity, light and temperature under controlled conditions.

The hundreds of observations made pointed to a remarkable fact, namely that all the animals and

plants operated on a 28-day cycle. Metabolism which was found to have dropped at the time of the new moon was twenty percent higher at the time of the phase of the full moon. This difference is described as a striking variation.

Once a nurse in Florida told a doctor that she noticed a lot more bleeding occurred when the moon was full. Like many doctors who are skeptical about such beliefs, he laughed at this statement. But the nurse produced records of surgical operations which clearly showed that during full moon, more patients had to be returned to the operating theatre than at any other time for treatment for excessive bleeding after operations. To satisfy himself, this doctor started keeping records on his own and he came to a similar conclusion.

When we consider all those occurrences, we can understand why our ancestors and religious teachers had advised us to change our daily routine and to relax physically and mentally on full moon and new moon days. The practice of religion is the most appropriate method for people to experience mental peace and physical relaxation. Buddhists are merely observing the wisdom of the past when they devote more time to activities of a spiritual nature on New Moon and Full Moon days.

BUDDHA AS A DENTIST



In an interesting passage in the *Cullavagga* of the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the Buddha assumes the role of a dentist. He advises His disciples to be careful in maintaining their oral and dental cleanliness. Here, He enumerates the five consequences of not brushing one's teeth well:

1. Bad breath
2. Weakening of one's eye-sight
3. Blockage of salivary gland ducts
& nerves of taste sensation
4. Phlegm and bile getting mix up with food
5. Developing a distaste for food

CONSULTING MEDIUMS

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

Consulting mediums is not a Buddhist practice: it is just a traditional belief to bring psychological relief.

In many countries, people seek the advice and guidance of mediums to overcome their problems in situations which they consider as beyond their comprehension.

The medium's help is sought in many ways and for various reasons. In time of sickness when medical help is apparently ineffective, some people may become desperate and turn anywhere to seek solace. At such times, mediums are often consulted.



Some people also turn to mediums when they are faced with a complex problem and are unable to find an acceptable solution. Others consult mediums out of greed in order to get rich quickly. Some people believe that when a medium is in a trance, the spirit of a certain god or deity communicates through the

medium and offers advice or guidance to those seeking help. Others believe that the trance-state is the work of the subconscious mind which surfaces and takes over the conscious mind.

Consulting mediums is a fairly common practice amongst the public in certain countries. The Buddhist attitude towards consulting mediums is non-committal. It is difficult to verify whether what the medium conveys is correct or not. The practice of consulting mediums is not a Buddhist practice; it is just a traditional practice that some people believe in very strongly.

Consulting mediums is for worldly material gain; the Teaching of the Buddha is for spiritual development. However, if people believe what the medium conveys is true, there is no reason for Buddhists to object to such practices, especially if there is no animal sacrifice involved, or others are not disadvantaged.

But, if a person really understands and practises the Teachings of the Buddha, he or she can realise the nature of the problems. Problems can be overcome without consulting any medium.

FAITH HEALING

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

Faith healing - a psychological approach by activating the immune system.

The practice of faith healing is prevalent in many countries. Many people try to influence the public through emotional persuasion designated as faith healing. In order to impress on their patients the efficacy of their healing powers, some faith healers use the name of god or a religious object to introduce a religious favour into their faith healing methods. The introduction of religion into faith healing is actually a guise or a decoy to beguile the patient into developing more devotion and to enhance the confidence or faith of the patient in the faith healer. This act if performed in public is intended to get converts to a particular religious denomination.



In actual fact, in so far as faith healing is concerned, religion is not all that important. There are numerous cases of faith healers performing their faith healing without using religion at all. A case in point is the science of hypnotism, the practice of which involves

no religion aspects at all. Those who associate religion with faith healing are in a way engaging in a subtle form of illusion trying to attract converts to their particular religion by making use of faith healing and describing certain cures as miraculous acts.

The methods employed by faith healers are to condition the minds of patients into having a certain mental attitude with the results that certain favourable psychological and physiological changes invariably take place. This attracts the condition of the mind, the heart, the consequent blood circulation and other related organic functions of the body thus creating an inspiration in the mind which influence the immune system. If sickness is attributed to the condition of the mind, then the mind can certainly be properly conditioned to assist in eradicating whatever illness that may occur.

In this context it is to be noted that the constant and regular practice of meditation can help to minimise if not to completely eradicate various forms of illness. There are many discourses in the Teaching of the Buddha where it was indicated that various forms of sicknesses were eradicated through the conditioning of the mind. Thus it is worthwhile to practice meditation in order to attain mental and physical wellbeing.

FORTUNE-TELLING AND CHARMS

-Ven. Dr. K. Sri. Dhammananda-

Hard work is the luckiest star.

Although Buddhism does not refute belief in deities, spirits, astrology and fortune-telling, the Buddha's advice was that people should not be slaves to any of those



forces. A good Buddhist can overcome all difficulties by knowing how to make use of intelligence and will-power. The above mentioned beliefs have no spiritual significance or value. A person must overcome all problems and difficulties by his or her own efforts and not through the medium of deities, spirits, astrology or fortune-telling. In one of the Buddhist JATAKA stories, the Bodhisatta said:

*'The fool may watch for lucky days,
Yet luck he shall always miss,
The luck itself is luck's own star,
What can mere stars achieve?'*

He believed that hard work was the luckiest star and one should not waste time by consulting stars and lucky days in order to achieve success. To do your best to help yourself is better than to rely solely on the stars or external sources.

Although some Buddhists practise fortune-telling and dispense some forms of charms or amulets under the guise of religion, the Buddha at no time encouraged anyone to practise such things. Like fortune-telling, charms come under the category of superstition, and have no religious value. Yet, there are many people today who, because of sickness and misfortunes attribute the cause of their illness and ill-luck to the power of charms. When the cause of certain sicknesses and misfortunes cannot be ascertained or traced, many people tend to believe that their problems are due to charms or some other external causes. They have forgotten that they are now living in the twentieth century. This is the modern age of scientific development and achievement. Our leading scientists have thrown aside many superstitious beliefs and they have even placed men on the moon! And no matter how strongly traditionalist religions object, the first human clone is almost at our doorstep.



All sicknesses owe their origin to either mental or physical causes. In Shakespeare, Macbeth asked a doctor if there was any medicine that could cure his wife and the doctor replied: 'More needs she the divine than the physician.' What he meant was that some diseases can only be cured if the mind is strong enough to face facts in life. Some severe mental disorders manifest themselves in a physical manner as in the case of ulcers, stomach aches, and so on.

Of course certain diseases are purely physical and can be cured by a competent doctor. And finally, some inexplicable disorders could be caused by what Buddhists call the ripening of the karmic fruit. This means we have to pay for some evil deed that we had committed in a past life. If we can understand this in the case of some incurable diseases, we can bear it with greater patience, knowing its real cause. This is not fatalism: we must still make all reasonable efforts to find a cure. But we do not expend unnecessary energy feeling sorry for ourselves. This is what we would call a realistic attitude.

People who cannot be cured of their sickness are advised to consult a medical specialist and obtain specialised attention. If after having gone through a medical check-up, a person still feels he or she is in

need of attention, then he or she may want to seek spiritual guidance from a proper religious teacher.

Buddhists are strongly advised against falling into the miserable pit of superstitious beliefs and allowing the mind to be troubled by unnecessary and unfounded fears. Cultivate strong will-power by refusing to believe in the influence of charms.

A short meditation course may also prove very helpful to clear the mind of unwholesome thoughts. Meditation leads to strengthen the mental energy. A developed mind automatically leads to a purified and healthy body. The Buddha-Dharma is a soothing balm to get rid of sickness of this nature.



OUR DESTINY LIES IN OUR HANDS
NOT ON THE LINES ON OUR HANDS!

GUARDIAN SPIRITS



AS WITH HUMANS, WHERE SOME ARE WORTHY OF REVERENCE AND OTHERS NOT, SO TOO WITH THE *NATS* (SPIRITS, CELESTIAL BEINGS AND DEITIES). BE MINDFUL OF *NATS* WORTHY OF REVERENCE, MAKE DUE OFFERINGS AND SHARE THE MERIT OF OUR GOOD DEEDS. JUST AS AMONG HUMANS, THOSE WE HELP AND SUPPORT CANNOT IN TURN HELP US IN ALL THINGS, BUT ONLY WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES ALLOW, SO TOO WITH THE GUARDIAN *NATS*. THEY TOO CAN HELP US ONLY WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES ALLOW.

-Sayadaw Thabyekan-

MEDICINE BUDDHA

In Buddhism, everyone can become a Buddha through the cultivation of spiritual values to the level of perfection. Therefore, Gautama Buddha is not the only Buddha in existence. One of the popular Buddhas before Him is Bhaisajyaguru Buddha. He is more commonly known as Medicine Buddha or 'Yao Shih Fwo'. He is often depicted in the form of holding a medicine bowl. While he was a bodhisattva (one who is undergoing spiritual training and aspires to become a Buddha), he made 12 great vows to free all living beings from suffering. The 7th vow is health related and therefore of special interest to me.



"I vow that after my reincarnation and having attained perfect enlightenment, those who are tormented by diseases, who have nobody whom they can seek for help, without a refuge, without a doctor, without medicine, without relatives, without a home, these poor and miserable beings shall all of them be free from diseases and pains, and shall enjoy perfect

health of body and mind, once my name reaches their ears. They shall have families, friends, properties and shall all be brought to the supreme Enlightenment of Buddha" It is because of this vow that He is known as the Medicine Buddha.

In view of this, many people who are sick often chant His name whole-heartedly, "NAMO BHAGAVATE BHAI SAJYAGURU BUDDHA" to invoke blessings for good health. This obviously has to be augmented by understanding and practising of the Dhamma before healing can occur completely. It is hence not only "...my name reaches their ears" but "...my name reaches the heart".

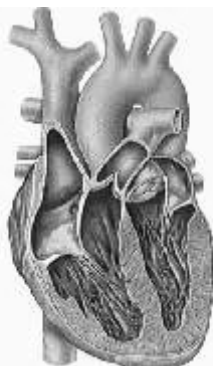
I serve as a volunteer at a free clinic in the Sentul Buddhist Temple. Whenever I'm on duty, I'll always recollect the greatness of the Medicine Buddha and serve the patients with this motto, "I Teach! I Preach! I Heal!" The value added service is that besides prescribing medicines (Heal), I'll try to educate (Teach) them about their illness and encourage them to do good deeds (Preach) to generate supportive kamma for healing.



HUMANIZED MEDICINE BUDDHAS

-By Liu King-pong-

On August 2, I gave a talk on the Medicine Buddha Sutra at the Tzu Chi Yungho branch office. In this sutra, the Medicine Buddha vows to eradicate illnesses, hunger, and all other physical and mental sufferings for all living beings.



Even though the Medicine Buddha Sutra is simple in its presentation and language, I still found it challenging to attempt to convey the essence of the Buddha's 12 great vows and other important passages within two hours to over a hundred Tzu Chi commissioners who might not be familiar with the sutra. An idea suddenly came to mind, inspired by an experience I had during a meeting at Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien. At the meeting, several volunteers talked about their visit to the Tzu Chi Great Love Village built for Muslim flood victims who once lived illegally along the banks of the Angke River in Jakarta.

Dr. Chien Sou-hsin, vice-superintendent of the Tzu Chi Dalin Hospital in central Taiwan, had also returned

from this journey. Using a computer program to create a visual presentation of the trip, Dr. Chien projected over fifty pictures that vividly illustrated how happy the Great Love Village residents were when they were officially given the keys to their new homes on July 18. Dr. Chien also used the program to show how he and other surgeons performed operations for various conditions such as cleft lips, cataracts, and hernias at the free clinic held during the two days after the grand opening of the village. "Why don't I follow suit by using a similar format to present the Medicine Buddha Sutra?" I asked myself.

With the help of Jo Wang, who works in our Religious Affairs Department in Hualien, I was able to incorporate all of Dr. Chien's pictures into my own presentation of the sutra. I surmised it was well received by my audience since no one fell asleep during my speech. For example, I projected on the screen the Buddha's sixth great vow for the audience to read:

I vow that in the next life when I attain Bodhi, I will cause living beings whose bodies are inferior and whose faculties are imperfect, who are ugly, dull, blind, deaf, dumb, mute, paralyzed, crippled, hunchbacked, leprous, insane, or have various other kinds of sicknesses and sufferings, to become upright

and intelligent upon hearing my name. May they all possess perfect faculties and be free of sickness and suffering.

Then I showed a picture of Dr. Chien treating a little girl's cleft lip followed by a close-up of her before her treatment. I could hear many people lament when they saw the little girl's fissured face, and I could also hear their sighs of relief when they saw how well she was being treated by Dr. Chien.

I was quite sure at that moment that everyone present could comprehend the important message that the Medicine Buddha wanted to convey in the sutra: that we must help the poor and sick by bringing forth compassion through concrete actions. I trust that these Tzu Chi commissioners will do so whenever possible.

Many people mistakenly believe that their bodies will be blessed and their health will be guaranteed if they devoutly chant the Medicine Buddha Sutra every day. Actually, the Buddha hopes that everyone will become Great Healers and offer help to those who are tormented by physical and mental illnesses.

Our foundation members in Indonesia have managed to build a Great Love Village of over 1,100 households.

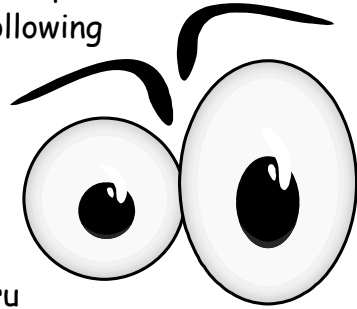
Furthermore, a permanent free clinic, elementary school, junior high school, and even a traditional Muslim funeral parlor have been established inside the village compound. The Angke River will soon flow through the city of Jakarta at its original depth of seven meters [23 ft] and width of seventy-five meters [248 ft] thanks to Tzu Chi members who have undertaken the task of dredging silt from the river.

I am so proud of the wonderful achievements made by our foundation members in Indonesia. Tzu Chi people in both Indonesia and Taiwan have truly abided by the Medicine Buddha's teachings and have grasped the opportunity to transform themselves into true Great Healers by reaching out to help those in need. Kudos to them!



MEDICINE BUDDHA VISUALIZATION

In a Medicine Buddha prayer, a spiritual form of visualization exercise is often practised for promoting good health. The following is an example of the visualization instruction by Dr. Thubten Gyatso.



"Imagine purifying rays of light pour down from the Guru Medicine Buddha's heart and holy body, eliminating your sickness and afflictions due to spirits, all your negative karma and mental obscuration. Your body is now completely filled with light and become clean-clear like crystal. Then the rays radiate out in all the mother sentient beings. The Guru Medicine Buddha melts into light and absorbs into your heart"

I was initially rather sceptical when I first read about this spiritual visualization technique, until I read about the following in the medical literature. In 1971, Dr. O. Carl Simonton, a radiologist at the University of Texas met a 61-year-old man with a very advance stage of throat cancer. The patient was so

weak that it seemed unlikely he would respond well to radiotherapy that is a standard therapy for this condition. In desperation, but also curious to try psychological approach,



Dr. Simonton suggested that the man enhance his radiotherapy through the use of visualization. He was taught to visualize his cancer as vividly as possible. Then, he was asked to visualize his immune system everyday as the white blood cells successfully attacked the cancer cells and swept them out of the body, leaving healthy cells behind. In a few weeks, the cancer growth became smaller and his response to radiation was almost free from side effects. After two months, the cancer was gone.

The two visualization exercises that I have mentioned share common principle. Healing is facilitated when we visualise it clearly in the MIND that it's happening and with the assistance of something or someone powerful e.g. Medicine Buddha or white blood cells in the body. The Buddha is absolute right in saying that

THE MIND DOES NOT ONLY MAKE ONE SICK, IT ALSO HEALS

As a Buddhist and a western doctor, I will probably marry the two similar techniques for myself into the following, "Imagine the healing energy from the auras of the Medicine Buddha absorbs into each and every cells in your body, cleansing, purifying, illuminating and energizing them. Then, request the wise and compassionate 'bodhi cells' to cuddle and gently transform the pathological cancerous cells back into normal functional cells." Spiritual awakening and healing of cancerous cells! Isn't that interesting?



BUDDHISTS BELIEVE THAT DISHARMONY BETWEEN
MIND AND BODY IS AT THE ROOT OF SICKNESS.
HEALING THROUGH MEDITATION CREATES HARMONY,
EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL, WHICH HELPS RELEASE
POTENTIAL HARMFUL BLOCKS AND VITALIZES THE
BODY DOWN TO THE LEVEL OF CELLS.

-Tulku Thondup Rinpoche-

THE POWER OF BELIEF IN HEALING

Belief is a potent medicine. It can play a key role in generating positive or negative healing responses in our bodies. After all, the Buddha's teaching frequently echoes the following

MIND IS CHIEF
EVERYTHING IS MIND MADE
MIND CAN MAKE ONE SICK
MIND CAN ALSO HEALS



Therefore, a patient going to his doctor must believe that the doctor can give him the best possible help and the drug that he is prescribing is going to work well. On the other hand, the doctor himself must also believe that what he is doing and giving the patient is going to work.

Numerous studies have reported on the power of belief and mind over body. A study was done at the Downstate Medical Centre in Brooklyn, USA, with asthmatic patients. Patients were asked to inhale a substance and were told that it would make their

asthma worse. Indeed, when the patients inhaled the substance, they suffered breathing difficulty and had wheezing. In reality, the substance given was only harmless saline water. The patients were subsequently asked to inhale another substance, which would restore their health. After inhaling this substance, the wheezing and breathing difficulty stopped. In actual fact, this second substance was also the same saline solution.

In modern medicine, this phenomenon is known as the Placebo Effect. A placebo is an empty or blank pill with no active ingredient but somehow works as well due to reasons not clearly known. The new field of science called Psychoneuroimmunology that studies our mind-brain and immune system interaction probably can shed more light on this phenomenon.

The brain somehow cannot distinguish clearly external or internal reality. As far as the brain is concerned, what it perceives to be true is real. Knowing this, it becomes imperative that healers understand that it is their responsibility to encourage positive, hopeful expectations in their patients while at the same time steering them away from beliefs that can be destructive.

In the book *Beyond Relaxation Response* by Dr. Herbert Benson, it was discovered that people who incorporate religious beliefs (coined as faith factor) into their meditation have enhanced relaxation response. Similarly, whatever health and healing principles found in this book will also be more effective if we have strong confidence in the Triple Gem. Do you believe it or not?



YOU ARE WHAT YOU BELIEVE!

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS OF AIDS

The Buddha taught about suffering. He taught the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering.



AIDS is suffering. And just as there is a cause for suffering, there is also a cause for AIDS. The cessation of AIDS also exists and there is a path leading to the cessation of AIDS.

The Buddha defined suffering as birth, old age, sickness and death. Getting what one wants is suffering, he said. And being separated from the things one loves is also suffering.

To define AIDS in terms of suffering we can say that being infected with HIV is suffering. Being ostracized and discriminated against is suffering. Loss of income through lack of employment is suffering. Seeing schools close their doors to innocent children is suffering. Falling ill and dying of AIDS is suffering.

The suffering of AIDS does not stop with the individual, however, but also extends into the family

and the community. Parents and children of people with AIDS also suffer.

A family suffers when its main breadwinner becomes infected with HIV and can no longer work to earn the money required to purchase daily needs. Parents suffer as they struggle to find the money needed to pay for their children's treatment. They suffer as they watch their children grow weak, fall ill and eventually die from AIDS.

Children suffer when they are teased and taunted by others because their parents have HIV/AIDS. They suffer when they find that schools and communities will not accept them. Children suffer when they see their parents, once a strong and healthy support, fade into thin, emaciated figures. They suffer when they see the ones they love die, leaving them orphaned, alone and insecure.



The community suffers through the loss of its workforce to HIV/AIDS. It suffers when it becomes divided and when income once generated by strong, healthy people is no longer available to finance community development. It suffers as it watches its

younger generation grow up alone, insecure and uneducated.

The nation also suffers through the loss of its workforce. It suffers through loss of productivity, resulting in loss of income or a deficit in the national budget. It suffers as it spends vast amounts of money it cannot afford to finance treatment for people who cannot be cured. The nation suffers as it watches its defenses and security weakened through the loss of its once healthy, young men and women.

Even religion suffers. Monks suffer as fewer and fewer people provide less and less food on morning alms round. They suffer when there is no one to contribute to the construction or maintenance of temples. They suffer when they see that there are no longer any young men to be ordained as monks, or young boys to be ordained as novices, leaving temples to become deserted and the religion to die.

Yes, AIDS is suffering.

But, if we look at the teachings of the Buddha, we will see that there is a cause for suffering.

As the Buddha has taught, ignorance is the cause of suffering.

What causes the suffering of AIDS?

It is also ignorance. Ignorance is the root cause for the suffering of AIDS.

Ignorance has caused more suffering and done more damage than the virus itself. Through ignorance, millions of people have been infected with HIV. Ignorance on how to live with HIV has resulted in the rapid and often unnecessary deterioration in health for many. Ignorance on the condition has led to discrimination and stigmatization, has divided communities and workplaces, closed classroom doors to innocent children and caused people to elect to die of their own hand rather than die of AIDS.

The Buddha taught that every condition has an opposite condition. Where there is sadness there is happiness, where there is ignorance there is knowledge, where there is suffering there is non-suffering.



The suffering of AIDS also has an opposite and that is the non-suffering of AIDS.

He also taught the way to end suffering by eliminating it at the cause - ignorance. Where there is knowledge, there is no ignorance and consequently no suffering.

The teachings of the Buddha can also be applied to HIV/AIDS. If we overcome the ignorance that surrounds AIDS and gives birth to all the suffering of AIDS, we can achieve the state where there is no suffering from AIDS.

The Noble Eight-Fold Path and AIDS

The Buddhist way to overcome suffering is by following the Noble Eight-fold Path. Many in the past have traveled this path successfully and it can be followed in the present.

The first step on the Noble Eight-fold Path is **Right Understanding** (*Sammaditthi*). With right understanding about HIV and AIDS, people will not get infected, fall ill and die. Right understanding can also prevent the prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviour that have a devastating impact on the person with HIV, the family and the community.

Right Thought (*Sammasankappa*) is the second step on the Noble Eight-Fold Path. Right thought about

HIV/AIDS helps to prevent risk behavior. It also helps to overcome prejudice and discrimination in the community. With right thought people with HIV/AIDS will be able to live happier and healthier lives and the community will remain united and prosper.

Right Speech (*Sammavaca*), the third step on the Noble Eight-Fold Path, is necessary to correct any misconceptions, superstitions and false-beliefs about HIV/AIDS. With right speech, there will be no malicious gossip or harmful talk about people with HIV/AIDS. Children will not be teased and taunted and the community will live in harmony. People who practice right speech will not lie or speak falsely about their behaviour or their condition.



Right Action (*Sammakammanta*) means performing wholesome acts that will not lead to risk behaviour and abstaining from behaviour that will put one at risk of being infected with HIV. It also means supportive behaviour such as showing compassion (*Metta*) and loving-kindness (*Karuna*) to people with HIV/AIDS and their families. This is the fourth step on the Noble Eight-Fold Path.

Right Livelihood (*Samma-ajiva*) is the fifth step on the Noble Eight-Fold Path. There are certain professions that put one at greater risk of contracting HIV than other professions. They include working in the entertainment industry such as in pubs and bars, working in the commercial sex industry,

dealing in alcohol and narcotics. By avoiding these professions one is practicing right livelihood and is at less risk of contracting AIDS.

Right Effort (*Sammavayama*) means applying effort in controlling personal behavior, saying no and not giving into peer pressure to engage in risk behavior. It also means applying effort in developing understanding and compassion, and in overcoming prejudiced attitudes. With right effort, a person with HIV/AIDS will be able to learn more about the condition, take care of personal health and live a longer, happier and more peaceful life. By applying right effort, one is treading the 6th step on the Noble Eight-Fold Path.

Right Mindfulness (*Sammasati*). This is the 7th step on the Noble Eight-Fold Path. The Buddha has taught that mindfulness should be practiced at all times. Without mindfulness in body, speech and mind, a person is more likely to do, say and think wrong things. A person who is not mindful can easily be led into

performing unwholesome acts that could result in infection with HIV. When there is no mindfulness, a person could say things which are incorrect, harmful and damaging, not only to himself but also to others. Wrong mindfulness can also cause unwholesome thoughts to arise that could lead to risk or damaging behavior.

Right Concentration (*Sammasamadhi*) Without concentration, the last step on the Noble Eight-Fold Path, a person becomes easily distracted, forgets what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, and is prone to perform acts that could lead to infection with HIV. Lack of concentration can also result in doing and saying things that are harmful to oneself and others. Concentration is also excellent for maintaining equanimity and calm which is very conducive to good health. A person with HIV who is able to maintain concentration will be able to enjoy long and peaceful life.

Thus, when looked from at from a Buddhist perspective, AIDS can be prevented and all the damaging impacts can be prevented.



IS RELIGION GOOD FOR HEALTH?

Is religion good for health? The answer is definitely YES. But, a lot of people think that this is a myth, personal belief or something unscientific.

Dr. Mathews who wrote the book, "The Faith Factor" did a review of scientific studies published in authoritative medical journals over the last three decades and he came to the following conclusion:



"We medical scientist are not jumping to conclusions when we say religion is good for your health. Any scientific research may be influenced by researcher bias but the soundness of faith factor data is confirmed by the replicability of their findings. Over 75% of 325 studies of different types, undertaken by hundreds of different researchers, have produced findings indicating the benefit of religious involvement to health and well-being"

In his book, "Faith and Prayer in the Healing of Cancer", Dr. Chris has shown scientifically that religious people and those doing good deeds to others reaped the following health benefits:

1. They enjoy a happier marriage and family life
2. They had greater sense of meaning and purpose in life
3. They stayed healthy
4. They lived longer
5. They had lower diastolic blood pressure
6. They coped well with stress
7. They suffered less from life-threatening and chronic illnesses such as cancer
8. They recovered faster and had fewer complications if they developed a serious illness
9. They were less likely to suffer from depression from stressful life events
10. They had a stronger immune system

A lot of this scientific literature has been ignored by scientist and unknown to religious people. But, the truth is the truth irrespective of whether we belief/know it or not. The following is one of the numerous studies indicating the health benefits of being religious/spiritual.

Dr. Allan Luks carried out a survey on thousands of volunteers across United States. The results of his study were discussed in his book, "The Power of Doing Good", in which he noted that people who help others (including strangers, not just family or friends) reported the following:

- They consistently reported better health
- Their health markedly improved when they began volunteer work
- 95% of them said helping others gave a physically good feeling. Nine out of ten experienced physical sensations of sudden warmth, increased energy and a sense of euphoria
- They reported long-term calmness and relaxation



HE WHO HELPS
OTHERS IS
HELPED!

Indeed, the selfless act of helping others as emphasized in religious practice resulted in enhanced health.

THE HEALTH CONNECTION

-Earth Sangha-

Your practice is a way of improving your personal health, and your personal health is connected to the health of the environment.

Buddhist practice aims at clarity of mind; that is obviously a form of mental health. And mental health is linked in various ways to physical health. That doesn't mean that a person who is injured or ill is incapable of practice, but it does mean that a reasonable concern for your physical well-being is liable to confer mental as well as physical benefits. The psychological benefits of physical fitness, for example, are apparent to the millions of people who have some sort of regular exercise program. This is hardly surprising, after all, since a human being is just a single organism—body and mind aren't really separate phenomena. So if you're concerned about your MENTAL HEALTH—and in some sense you must be if you're a practicing Buddhist—then you should also be concerned about your PHYSICAL HEALTH. In a way, it might make more sense to think—not of mental and physical health as separate categories—but of a single category: personal health.



Concern with one's PERSONAL HEALTH leads inevitably to a concern with ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH. How healthy is the food you eat, the water you drink, or the air you breathe? The answer, in large measure, depends on how healthy the environment is. This connection is not just a theoretical concern: about 25 percent of the current global burden of disease and injury is linked in one way or another to environmental degradation, according to a study released several years ago by the UN World Health Organization. (*WHO, Health and Environment in Sustainable Development*, June 1997.)

It's not difficult to see why people are so vulnerable to environmental damage: the distinction between you and the environment is as misleading as the distinction between your mind and your body. Water, air, and nutrients cycle through you just as they cycle through other living things. In effect, you *are* the environment. So if you're going to care about one little chunk of the environment (you) - it makes good sense to care about the rest of it!

A TIBETAN BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE OF HEALING

Compiled by:

Ven. Pende Hawter
The Karuna Hospice
Service.

What is healing?

What do we mean by healing? Do we mean healing of the physical body, healing of the psyche/soul/mind, or both of these. What is the connection between body and mind? Many modern healing techniques regard successful healing as the cure of the presenting physical problem, whether this be symptoms of cancer, AIDS, chronic fatigue syndrome, or some other illness. If the person does not recover from the presenting physical problem, or if that problem recurs or another develops at a later time, this may be regarded as failure. It is not uncommon in these situations for the therapist or organisation that has been helping the "sick" person to infer or state that



the person must have done something wrong, that they haven't stuck strictly enough to the diet or meditated enough or done whatever else it was that they were supposed to do. In these situations the person can become very guilty, depressed or angry. In many cases, they just give up hope. To avoid these problems, it is necessary to consider a more comprehensive view of healing that incorporates not only physical healing but mental healing.

Mind is the creator

To understand healing from the Buddhist perspective, a useful starting point is to consider the Buddhist concept of mind. The mind is non-physical. It is formless, shapeless, colourless, genderless and has the ability to cognize or know. The basic nature of mind is pure, limitless and pervasive, like the sun shining unobstructedly in a clear sky. The problems or sickness we experience are like clouds in the sky obscuring the sun. Just as the clouds temporarily block the sun but are not of the same nature as the sun, our problems or sickness are temporary and the causes of them can be removed from the mind. From the Buddhist perspective, the mind is the creator of sickness and health. In fact, the mind is believed to be the creator of all of our problems. That is, the cause of disease is internal, not external.

Unlimited potential

You are probably familiar with the concept of karma, which literally means action. All of our actions lay down imprints on our mindstream which have the potential to ripen at some time in the future. These actions can be



positive, negative or neutral. These karmic seeds are never lost. The negative ones can ripen at any time in the form of problems or sickness; the positive ones in the form of happiness, health or success. To heal present sickness, we have to engage in positive actions now. To prevent sickness occurring again in the future, we have to purify, or clear, the negative karmic imprints that remain on our mindstream. Karma is the creator of all happiness and suffering. If we don't have negative karma we will not get sick or receive harm from others. Buddhism asserts that everything that happens to us now is the result of our previous actions, not only in this lifetime but in other

lifetimes. What we do now determines what will happen to us in the future. In terms of present and future healing, the main objective is to guard our own actions, or karma. This requires constant mindfulness and awareness of all the actions of our body, speech and mind. We should avoid carrying out any actions that are harmful to ourselves and to others. Buddhism is therefore a philosophy of total personal responsibility. We have the ability to control our destiny, including the state of our body and mind. Each one of us has unlimited potential - what we have to do is develop that potential.

Healthy mind, healthy body

Why do some people get ill while others remain in the best of health? Consider skin cancer. Of all the people who spend many hours out in the sun, some will develop skin cancer and others will not. The external situation is the same for all of them, but only some will be affected. The secondary cause of the skin cancer - the sun - is external, but the primary cause - the imprints laid down on the mindstream by previous actions - is internal. Also, people with similar types of cancer will often respond quite differently to the same treatment, whether this be orthodox or alternative. Some will make a complete recovery. Some will recover temporarily and then develop a

recurrence. Others will rapidly become worse and die. Logically one has to look to the mind for the cause of these differences. Buddhism asserts that for lasting healing to occur, it is necessary to heal not only the current disease with medicines and other forms of treatment, but also the cause of the disease, which originates from the mind. If we do not heal or purify the mind, the sickness and problems will recur again and again.

This introduces the notion of "ultimate healing". By ridding the mind of all its accumulated "garbage", all of the previously committed negative actions and thoughts, and their imprints, we can be free of problems and sickness permanently. We can achieve ultimate healing - a state of permanent health and happiness. In order to heal the mind and hence the body, we have to eliminate negative thoughts and their imprints, and replace them with positive thoughts and imprints.

The inner enemy

The basic root of our problems and sickness is selfishness, what we can call the inner enemy. Selfishness causes us to engage in negative actions, which place negative imprints on the mindstream. These negative actions can be of body, speech or

mind, such as thoughts of jealousy, anger and greed. Selfish thoughts also increase pride, which results in feelings of jealousy towards those higher than us, superiority towards those lower than us and competitiveness towards equals. These feelings in turn result in an unhappy mind, a mind that is without peace. On the other hand, thoughts and actions directed to the well-being of others bring happiness and peace to the mind.



Tibetan Tree of Health & Disease

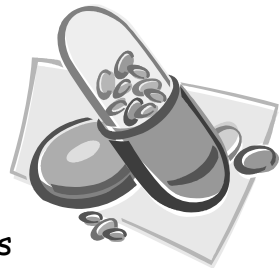
Conscious living, conscious dying

It is important to consider what happens to us when we die. The Buddhist view is that at the time of death the subtle consciousness, which carries with it all the karmic imprints from previous lives, separates from the body. After spending up to forty-nine days in an intermediate state between lives, the consciousness enters the fertilised egg of its future mother at or near the moment of conception. New life then begins. We bring into our new life a long history of previous

actions with the potential to ripen at any time or in any of a myriad ways. The state of mind at the time of death is vitally important and can have a considerable effect on the situation into which we are reborn. Hence the need to prepare well for death and to be able to approach our death with a peaceful, calm and controlled mind. Death itself can be natural, due to exhaustion of the lifespan, or untimely, due to certain obstacles. These obstacles arise from the mind and can be counteracted in different ways. One method commonly employed in Tibetan Buddhism to remove life obstacles is to save the lives of animals that would otherwise have been killed. For example, animals can be rescued from being slaughtered or live bait can be purchased and released. For those with a life threatening illness, it is important to understand that being free of that illness doesn't mean that you will have a long life. There are many causes of death and death can happen to anybody at any time.

Not just pills and potions

Tibetan medicine is popular and effective. It is mostly herbal medicine, but its uniqueness lies in the fact that in the course of its preparation it is blessed extensively with prayers and mantras, giving it more power. It is said



that taking such medicine will either result in recovery, or, if the person is close to death, they will die quickly and painlessly. (Another theory, based on personal experience, is that it tastes so bad you want to recover quickly so that you can stop taking the medicine!).

Blessed pills and blessed water are also used extensively. The more spiritually developed the person carrying out the blessings or the healing practices, the more powerful is the healing result or potential. These pills often contain the relics of previous great meditators and saints, bestowing much power on the pills.

Many Tibetan lamas actually blow on the affected part of the body to effect healing or pain relief. I have seen a person with AIDS with intense leg pain have his pain disappear after a lama meditated intensely and blew on his leg for twenty minutes. Compassion is the power that heals.

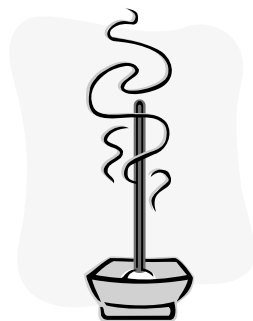


Visualisation can also be very powerful healing. One method is to visualise a ball of white light above your head, with the light spreading in all directions. Imagine the light spreading through your body, completely dissolving away all sickness and problems.

Concentrate on the image of your body as completely healed and in the nature of light. This type of meditation is even more powerful when combined with visualising holy images and reciting mantras. I often tell my Christian patients to visualise the light as Jesus, with the light emanating from him.

In the Tibetan tradition, there are many Buddha figures (deities) which can be visualised while reciting their mantra. The Medicine Buddha; Chenrezig, or Avalokiteshvara (the Buddha of Compassion); or one of the long-life deities such as Amitabha are commonly used. Deities can be in peaceful or wrathful aspects. The wrathful ones are often used to cure heavy disease such as AIDS.

If you are not comfortable with these images, you can use other objects such as crystals, or simply visualise all the universal healing energy absorbing into you, transforming your body into light, and imagine yourself as totally healed.



Over the centuries many people have used these methods and have recovered from their illnesses, even from conditions such as leprosy, paralysis and

cancer. The aim of these practises is to heal the mind as well as the body, so that the diseases or problems will not recur in the future. Also, many diseases are associated with spirit harm. Lamas and other practitioners will often recite certain prayers and mantras or engage in ceremonies to stop the spirit harm and allow the person to recover.



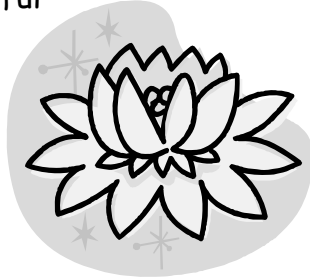
A seven year old girl I knew had petit-mal epilepsy as the result of spirit harm; the epilepsy disappeared after various rituals and prayers had been performed. Whenever she had an epileptic attack, the girl would see a frightening apparition coming towards her. After the initial prayers had been performed, however, her attacks lessened and she would see a brick wall between her and the frightening figure. This wall was the colour of a monk's robes. Eventually the attacks and visions disappeared altogether.

In summary, we can say that the essential ingredients in the healing process, for both the person doing the healing and the person being healed, are compassion, faith, and pure morality.

Changing our minds

Another powerful method of healing in Tibetan Buddhism is to meditate on the teachings known as thought transformation. These methods allow a person to see the problem or sickness as something positive rather than negative. A problem is only a problem if we label it a problem. If we look at a problem differently, we can see it as an opportunity to grow or to practice, and regard it as something positive. We can think that having this problem now ripens our previous karma, which does not then have to be experienced in the future.

If someone gets angry at us, we can choose to be angry in return or to be thankful to them for giving us the chance to practice patience and purify this particular karma. It takes a lot of practice to master these methods, but it can be done.



It is our concepts which often bring the greatest suffering and fear. For example, due to a set of signs and symptoms, the doctor gives the label 'AIDS' or 'cancer'. This can cause great distress in a person's mind, because they forget that it is only a label, that

there is no truly existent, permanent AIDS or cancer. 'Death' is another label that can generate a lot of fear. But in reality 'death' is only a label for what happens when the consciousness separates from the body, and there is no real death from its own side. This also relates to our concept of 'I' and of all other phenomena. They are all just labels and have no true, independent existence.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche, a highly realised Tibetan Lama, says that the most powerful healing methods of all are those based on compassion, the wish to free other beings from their suffering. The compassionate mind - calm, peaceful, joyful and stress-free - is the ideal mental environment for healing. A mind of compassion stops our being totally wrapped up in our own suffering situations. By reaching out to others we become aware of not just my pain but the pain (that is, the pain of all beings).



Many people find the following technique powerful and effective: think "By me experiencing this disease or pain or problem, may all the other beings in the world be free of this disease, pain or problem" or "I am experiencing this pain/sickness/problem on behalf of all living beings."

One voluntarily takes on suffering in order for others to be free of it. This is similar to the Christian concept of regarding one's suffering as sharing the suffering of Jesus on the cross. Even death can be used in this way: "By me experiencing death, may all other beings be freed from the fears and difficulties of the death process."

We have to ask ourselves "What is the purpose of my life? Why do I want to have good health and a long life?". The ultimate purpose of our life is to be of benefit to others. If we live longer and just create more negative karma, it is a waste of time.



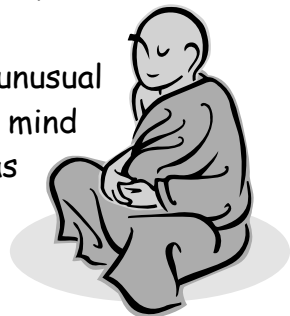
Giving and taking is another powerful meditation. As you breathe in, visualise taking the suffering and the causes of suffering from all living beings, in the form of black smoke. When breathing in the black smoke, visualise smashing the black rock of selfishness at your heart, allowing compassion to manifest freely. As you breathe out, visualise breathing out white light that brings them happiness, enjoyment and wisdom.

Developing compassion is more important than having

friends, wealth, education. Why? Because it is only compassion that guarantees a happy and peaceful mind, and it is the best thing to help us at the time of death. We can use our sickness and problems in a very powerful way for spiritual growth, resulting in the development of compassion and wisdom. The highest development of these qualities is the full realisation of our potential, the state of full enlightenment. Enlightenment brings great benefit to ourselves and allows us to work extensively for others. This is the state of ultimate healing.

I have outlined some of the concepts that are the basis of the Buddhist philosophy on healing. Many of these methods were taught by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Tara Institute in Melbourne in August 1991 during the first course given by Lama Zopa specifically for people with life-threatening illnesses.

Some of these ideas may appear unusual at first, but please keep an open mind about them. If some of the ideas appear useful to you, please use them; if not, leave them aside.



May you achieve health and happiness!

Chapter 13



BUDDHIST HEALTH SERVICES

TZU-CHI INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (TIMA)



Buddhism has contributed greatly to healthcare services in the world. There are numerous Buddhist organizations that are involved in healthcare services. One of the internationally established ones is TIMA. The Tzu-Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) is formed by a group of healthcare professionals under Buddhist Tzu-Chi Compassion Relief Foundation headquartered in Taiwan with branches worldwide. There are now TIMA members in 19 countries including Malaysia. It is a private non-profit and self-funded organization that provides the highest possible quality care to people in need around the world. Emphasis is on humanity rather than simply curing diseases. Through participation in TIMA activities, the volunteers may continuously prove themselves to elevate the spirits of healing to the highest level: GREAT KINDNESS TO THE KNOWN AND UNKNOWN, AND GREAT COMPASSION FOR ALL.

Missions

- To carry out international and local medical missions for the needy.
- To support Tzu-Chi's global relief missions.
- To support Tzu-Chi's medical network in Taiwan and any future developments.
- To provide community health care services including free clinics rural outreach and urban gap group support.
- To ensure continuous quality improvement including volunteer training and credentialing.
- To provide medical advice for Tzu-Chi Foundation branches worldwide.

TIMA Malaysia

Under the guidance of Master Cheng Yen in Taiwan, Malaysian Tzu-Chi volunteers devote themselves wholeheartedly to serving the poor regardless of racial or religious boundaries. In reaching out to the needy in local communities, Tzu-Chi Malaysia branch came to realize that illness is commonly the root of poverty. This is true especially for some Tzu-Chi relief recipients who are afflicted with kidney failure. The costly medical expenses for the disease, coupled with inadequate dialysis facilities,

not only worsened their conditions but also leave them feeling hopeless while their lives fade away. Recognizing the needs of this sector of the society, Tzu-Chi Malaysia decided to set up a dialysis centre in Penang. In addition to relieving the patients suffering by providing a professional treatment facility with great love and care, the Tzu-Chi members hope the establishment of the dialysis center can provide an opportunity for other good Samaritans to join Tzu-Chi's life-saving medical missions.

The Dialysis Center:

DESIGN. The Tzu-Chi Dialysis Center, situated to the east of Penang is carefully designed to create a homely atmosphere. It includes the following functional areas: diagnosis room, emergency room, meeting room, reception area, lobby, cafeteria, kitchen, worship hall, social service department and dialysis unit. The dialysis unit is further divided into dialysis system area, bathroom, and nursing station.

SERVICES. Currently, the dialysis center provides services to low-income families and the elderly without caretakers. Most patients apply for services themselves, but some are referred by others. In the dialysis center, patients can receive not only quality medical care but also thoughtfully prepared

vegetarian meals for breakfast and lunch. Social workers also visit patients at home as needed.

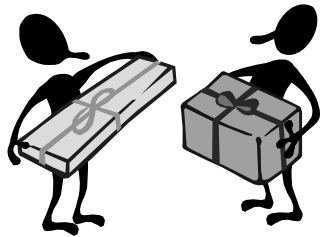
STAFF. The center staff includes nurses, nurse assistants, social workers, drivers, administrators and volunteer doctors working in shifts. What distinguishes the dialysis center from other similar institutions is Tzu-Chi's volunteer service, which is the core of daily operation. Every day there are Tzu-Chi volunteers working in shifts on various tasks such as meal preparation, cleaning and patient support. The volunteers always strive to alleviate the patients' discomfort with sincerity and consideration.

FINANCE. In the face of tremendous dialysis expenses, the center relies on Tzu-Chi commissioners to raise funds through fundraising events and recycling, a routine activity by Tzu-Chi volunteers as part of their community service work. Presently, proceeds raised from recycling constitute the center's major source of income. Over the years, Tzu-Chi members have recycled thousands of newspaper, clothes and cans to help maintain the dialysis center as well as to conserve the environment.

A LONG ROAD AHEAD. The dialysis center gives an avenue of hope to the dialysis patients, yet it is only the beginning of Tzu-Chi Malaysia's medical mission.

Other outreach medical care projects are being planned. Despite the hardship the Malaysia branch has experienced in the past, Tzu-Chi members know only one thing that matters most to them: LIFE MUST BE RESPECTED, COMPASSION MUST BE FEARLESS. Tzu-Chi Malaysia will persevere to lay a solid foundation for Tzu-Chi's medical mission in Malaysia.

I once followed a friend of mine from this wonderful Tzu Chi to visit terminal patients in the Palliative Care Unit in



Ipoh Hospital. I am truly inspired by the palpable enthusiasm shown by them in relieving the sufferings of the patients. They are indeed doing a fantastic job and walking the foot steps of the All-Compassionate Buddha! I personally try my best to walk the Buddha's path by involving myself in two Buddhist organizations that provide healthcare services. The first one is Sri Jayanthi Welfare Organization (SJWO), the welfare arm of Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple in Sentul. Among the healthcare services run by this organization are free medical clinic, medical and health seminars, blood donation campaign, medical camp, old folk's home etc. The second one is Buddhist Gem Fellowship of Malaysia (BGF) that runs free telephone counseling

services and trains para-counselors to promote mental health.

In the hospital I'm working in (HKL), I know of two great Buddhist friends with mega-compassion who diligently visit patients in the oncology ward every Wednesday evening without fail, and they have been doing that for years. Maha-Sadhu to them!



ALWAYS COMPARE WHO IS MORE CARING
AND LOVING FOR ONE ANOTHER
RATHER THAN TO COMPETE
WHO HOLDS GREATER FEAR FOR THE OTHER

-Master Shi Zheng-Yan

THEIR STORIES HOME VISITS BY TZU-CHI MEMBERS IN MALAYSIA

-By Weng Yu-min-

-Translated by Norman Yuan-

Life is a symphony, and the music may be light, joyful, exciting, grievous or indignant. Even if the tone and rhythm are the same, the mood of the listener changes with the music. If the audience applauds, life's symphony will be different.

Affizi Doesn't Cry Any More (Penang)

He only spent 365 days in this world, but the suffering of a lifetime was compressed into his brief stay.



The first time I saw Affizi, I was shocked to see such a small body shouldering such a large head. Feeling sorry for his burden, I stroked his head carefully. Touching the head of this boy afflicted with hydrocephalus was like touching a balloon filled with water. I could see the veins beating clearly in his semi-transparent head.

In 1995, TV reports of the birth of a big-headed baby attracted the attention of the public. After learning of the poor financial condition of the baby's family, Tzu Chi members living in Penang decided to pay them a visit.

An Unusually Quiet Baby

The mother told us that when she was pregnant, she could feel the embryo was unusually quiet. She had no prenatal checkup. Because the baby in her womb was silent and still, she was very much worried. After nine months of pregnancy, she delivered by cesarean section. The circumference of Affizi's head was only 17 cm [6.8 in] at birth. Later, however, his head swelled with cerebral spinal fluid, and its circumference grew to 78 cm [31.2 in].

"We looked for doctors and shamans everywhere. We traveled thousands of miles, but none of them wanted to touch him. They all said he was hopeless. Some even said the baby had no brain. How could that be possible? His hands and feet are still moving." Saying this, the mother's voice was choked with sadness, but her anxious eyes still held a ray of hope.

Looking at Affizi lying on his bed, I couldn't tell whether he was sleeping or awake. His bright eyes,

which should normally look excitedly out on the world, were squeezed into his eye sockets because of the pressure of his growing head. He couldn't even shed tears when he cried.

"Fortunately, Affizi no longer cries. Otherwise, it would break my heart." The mother's hand lightly and lovingly touched the baby's head, which seemed ready to burst at any time. Our hearts trembled with the movements of the mother's hand. Did Affizi accept his fate?

He Had Feelings

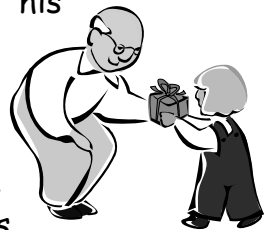
Affizi's father worked for a lawn-mowing company. His mother had to look after the three children -- Affizi and his two sisters -- and thus she was too busy to work outside the home. The family could barely make ends meet. Because of Affizi's illness, they had spent all their savings.

The family was Malaysian. They had been Muslims for generations, and they accepted calmly whatever had been arranged for them by Heaven. Although their family was not in good financial shape, and although Affizi could no longer open his eyes to see them, his parents held firm to their faith. "We believe every child has his own blessings and karma. We believe

Heaven will make the proper arrangements for him. No matter how Affizi looks, he is still our dear child. We love him all the same."

Affizi had two sisters, aged six and eight. Both of them were healthy and active. Sometimes they would hide in a corner of the house, glancing at visitors. Sometimes they would come out to play with their brother. They thought Affizi merely had a larger head than ordinary babies, and still loved their only brother. The older sister, who was in first grade, asked us to give her a picture of her brother so that she could take it to school with her. She said she missed him while she was at school. "Usually people think he has no feelings. Actually, he does. Every time his father or grandfather calls him, although his head is too heavy to move, he moves his body to respond to them." Talking about Affizi, the mother had a lot to say.

"Affizi, Affizi" Returning from a day at work, the baby's father called the name of his dear son. Affizi waved his hand. Our hearts twisted - it was the love of his parents, who would never forsake him, that kept Affizi alive. The more we got to know Affizi's family, the more we respected them.



Shouldering the Suffering of Life Alone

We decided to help with their living expenses first. We also decided to send Affizi to a nearby hospital to have his nasogastric tube replaced. Affizi's head was too big to suck milk. He could only be fed through a nasogastric tube. Every time the tube was put into his thin body, he would tremble. When the milk flowed into his stomach, he would cough and vomit. Green veins could clearly be seen on his forehead. Under the care of his family, Affizi continued to live. However, his small body had to shoulder all the suffering alone.

Tzu Chi members in Penang made arrangements to send Affizi to Malaysia University Hospital in Kuala Lumpur. After an examination, the doctor shook his head. Later, Affizi was transferred to the Central Hospital in Kuala Lumpur. The diagnosis confirmed that Affizi was afflicted with hydrocephalus and that there was no possibility of a cure.

Affizi's parents could not accept what the doctor said. Quietly, they looked up to heaven. Was it fair that fate should be so cruel to them? They found the answer in Central Hospital. There they saw babies suffering the same as their own son. Some had heads as small as a rat's head, and some had noses as big as a pig's nose. They realized that other parents in the

world agonized over their children's suffering, just as they did.

On December 10, 1995, Affizi passed away peacefully.

"We may not be able to say the name of your organization correctly. But when you walk in our small village, wearing your uniforms of blue shirts with white collars, every villager knows you are nice people." Although still in deep sorrow, Affizi's parents were already eager to show their gratitude to Tzu Chi.

Affizi's parents told Tzu Chi members that, regardless of differences in race and belief, we are all one big family.

Love Between a Brother and a Sister (Malacca)

His mother has passed away, and his wife has left him. Yet Ching-ho has been looking after his mentally retarded sister, King-fung, quietly shouldering the heavy responsibility of her care.

It was cold and raining cats and dogs outside the Tzu Chi Malacca Liaison Office. Inside, however, the office was filled with love and laughter. Tzu Chi brothers and sisters brought a cake and a basket of

tangerines and got into Brother Shih-fang's pickup truck. They were now ready to go to Machap Umboo, a small village about 30 km [18.6 mi] from downtown Malacca.

About 30 minutes later, they turned onto a narrow road. Lining both sides of the road were several homes, each growing a couple of pomegranate trees (the "king of fruits") in their yard. Although the rain was easing up, the road was still very bumpy and muddy.

Brother Shih-fang drove one kilometer farther and stopped at a shack along the road. "King-fung, Tzu Chi people are here," shouted Sister Chiu-li in Fukienese. A hoarse laugh was heard from the shack. Hearing that sound, the Tzu Chi brothers and sisters smiled.

The first time Tzu Chi members met King-fung was three years ago. At that time she was quiet and melancholy. When we encouraged her to talk, she only responded with a smile. Her brother Ching-ho sat beside us in silence. He felt a little uncomfortable and confused about our visit.

After a long talk, we discovered that King-fung had had meningitis in her childhood, which resulted in mental retardation and atrophy of the limbs, making it

difficult for her to move. Because of her disability, her mother spoiled her. She became stubborn and lost her temper easily.

Urging Her to Talk Word by Word

Originally, King-fung lived in Singapore with her mother, brother and sister-in-law. After her mother passed away, her brother moved the family to their native town of Machap Umboo in Malaysia. He made a living by tapping rubber trees.

Ching-ho's wife could not get used to the country life, so several years ago she took the children and left. Since then, Ching-ho and his sister have depended solely on each other. Last year he was laid off by the owner of the rubber tree plantation, so Ching-ho turned his energies to planting pomegranates and rambutans in the orchard left by his parents. In this way, he could support himself financially.



When they moved back to their hometown, Ching-ho was very busy. He didn't give as much attention to his sister as his mother had. Whenever King-fung lost her temper, Ching-ho would reproach her. If she refused to obey him, he would slap her on her palms lightly as a warning. Gradually,

she became obedient. However, because she didn't have anyone else to talk to, she forgot how to speak.

In order to enable her to speak again, we encouraged her and chatted with her when we visited her every Sunday. We kept up the conversation whether she understood us or not, and we would touch her hair and cheeks, showing our concern with body language. At first, she made no response, but she gradually began to smile, and sometimes she would burst out with one or two words. Once she spoke a complete sentence: "You are blessed, but you don't have money." This sudden exclamation surprised us and provoked a roar of laughter. She was making progress.

Crafty Words That Sweetened Our Hearts

Recently, one of our sisters teased her by asking, "King-fung, what color is my heart?" She responded with a smile, "Black heart." The sister shrugged her shoulders, stamped her feet, and stuck out her lips, pretending to be displeased. "You say my heart is black. I will not come again!" Then she teased King-fung, "What color is your heart?" King-fung laughed twice and replied, "Black."

This "black heart" darling had become a weekly concern of our Tzu Chi members. King-fung likes cake.

Each time we visited her, we brought her one or two pieces of cake to satisfy her craving. When she was eating the cake, she would point to a chair and say, "Chair, sit down." Then, habitually, she would touch Sister Chiu-li and Sister Whyc-heng on their foreheads with her forefinger. She had the coy manner that usually belongs to little girls. When she ate the tangerine that one of our sisters put into her mouth, she said happily, "How sweet!" Seeing that King-fung had resumed her thinking and speaking ability, we brothers and sisters had feelings as sweet as the tangerines.

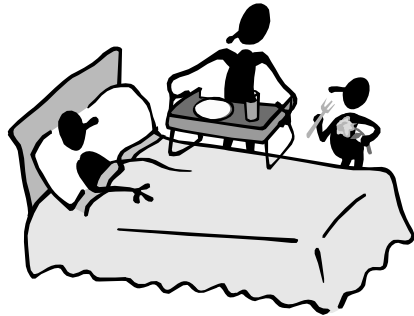
In order to help King-fung make new friends and experience social activities, we made arrangements to have her and her brother participate in our monthly distribution to the poor. Never before had King-fung had any contact with the outside world. The first time she saw a large group of people, she was so scared that she burst into tears. Our sisters had to comfort her and stay by her side. After a few times, she no longer needed this constant companionship. When we sang, she would dance along. Now the monthly distribution day has become King-fung's excursion day, which she looks forward to with great anticipation.



King-fung is the center of Ching-ho's life. Because he worries about her, he seldom leaves their shack unless he has to go out to buy food and daily necessities. Other than his sister, the things that keep him company are an old TV set, a radio/cassette recorder, and a house full of peace and quiet. Recently he has taken part in an environmental protection campaign held by the Tzu Chi Malacca Liaison Office. He goes out to collect used cardboard boxes, bottles and cans.

The unselfish caring has added an air of affection to the mountain village. The warmth of the love between this brother and sister will move the hearts of Tzu Chi people always.

(Information provided by
Chong Ah-kau and Lok
Whyc-heng)



DO NOT LOOK DOWN ON SMALL CONTRIBUTION
TO SOCIETY AS BEING SHABBY. EVEN THE
TINIEST BOLT MUST BE SCREWED ON TIGHTLY
TO FUNCTION ITS FULL CAPACITY

-Master Shi Zheng-Yan

SANGHA METTA PROJECT

The Sangha Metta Project, which engages monks in HIV/AIDS prevention and care, is unique in that it was initiated by monks themselves in response to the need for Buddhist monks to have a more active role in HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Taking the Buddha's teachings as their inspiration, monks concluded that a core aspect of HIV/AIDS was ignorance about the condition among both the sufferers and the general public.



In line with their traditional role as teachers, they decided they could teach both groups about its realities. Within this basic framework, the Sangha Metta Project teaches monks, nuns and novices about HIV/AIDS. It then equips them with modern participatory social management skills and tools so that they can in turn work effectively in their communities both to prevent further HIV transmission and to help people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. A crucial part of training is close contact between monks and sufferers, which includes

monks having to accept and eat alms food prepared by people with HIV/AIDS. Sensitized in such basic ways they are soon able to work freely with affected people in quite remarkable ways.

One of the most important developments is that, in strong contrast with their formal roles, project-trained monks have become active in community work. Using Buddhist ethics as their guideline, they now teach villagers how to avoid high-risk behavior, help to set up support groups, train people with HIV/AIDS in handicrafts, donate their alms and take care of AIDS orphans. Because local people are accustomed to telling monks their troubles, the latter have become a conduit for identifying many secret HIV+ people who, once identified, can be referred to support groups and public assistance programs. "HIV-friendly" temples encourage these people to participate in community activities. They also provide training in meditation as well as grow and dispense herbal medicines in collaboration with local hospitals. This more active role among monks is strengthening trust between them and the people. It is also developing community potential and encouraging greater grass roots participation in solving problem at the local level. Because the project has given monks a way to become actively involved in their communities,

something they have always wanted, it is spreading rapidly into other regions of Thailand, as well as neighboring countries such as Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, Southern China, Vietnam and even Mongolia and Bhutan.

The Sangha Metta Project has the following objectives:

1. To provide Buddhist monks with an opportunity to take part in HIV/AIDS prevention and care.
2. To establish a network of Buddhist monks capable of working in HIV/AIDS prevention & care.
3. To help Buddhist monks identify roles they can play in HIV/AIDS prevention and care.
4. To provide Buddhist monks with accurate and up-to-date information on HIV/AIDS prevention, transmission and care.
5. To organize seminars, workshops and training programs for Buddhist monks, nuns and novices.
6. To equip Buddhist monks, nuns and novices with participatory social management skills to enable them to work more effectively in HIV/AIDS prevention and care.
7. To serve as a resource center providing information and materials on HIV/AIDS.

8. To promote and support the role of Buddhist monks, nuns and novices in HIV/AIDS prevention and care.
9. To cooperate and coordinate with other organizations working in HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

The Sangha Metta Project conducts and supports the following activities:

1. Education - seminars, training programs and workshops for monks, nuns, novices and Buddhist laity.
2. Youth activities - education on HIV/AIDS and narcotics awareness, prevention and care through youth camps and other youth activities.
3. Home/Community visits - to provide moral support, Buddhist-based counseling, advice on self/home-based care and give donations.
4. Vocational training - provide venues and materials, coordinate with trainers, funding sources and marketing.
5. Temple activities - daily/weekly meditation retreats, care and/or ordination for boys orphaned by HIV/AIDS, coordination with nuns to care for girls and women affected by HIV/AIDS.

6. Resource center - printed/audiovisual materials, brochures, posters and speakers.
7. Education Fund - for children orphaned or affected by HIV/AIDS.
8. Milk Bank - for children orphaned or affected by HIV/AIDS.
9. Medicine Bank - for people living with HIV/AIDS.
10. Sanghathan (alms) bank.
11. Funeral robes bank - for families of people who have died of AIDS.

Monks give scholarships to children orphaned or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Target Groups:

(1) Buddhist monks, nuns and novices studying in Buddhist universities & colleges in Thailand.

(2) Buddhist monks, nuns, novices and community leaders in other regions of Thailand.

(3) Buddhist monks, nuns and novices in neighboring countries.



LAPIS LAZULI LIGHT

Lapis Lazuli Light Society is a non-profit making centre and support group founded by Dr. Lai Chui Nan (PhD) who is a Buddhist. The centre is dedicated to the promoting of physical, mental and spiritual health, and the cultivation of compassion. The following are the 10 tips recommended for total physical, mental and spiritual health.



1. Have a good heart. Refrain from all forms of harming, in particular killing.
2. Adopt a diet based on whole grains, vegetables, fruits, seeds, nuts, legumes and sea vegetables.
3. Let go of old wounds, anger and grief. Contemplate on the true nature of all phenomena: illusory, dreamlike, impermanent and ladling in self-nature.
4. Engage in meaningful work that benefits others.

5. Surround oneself with loving and supportive people.

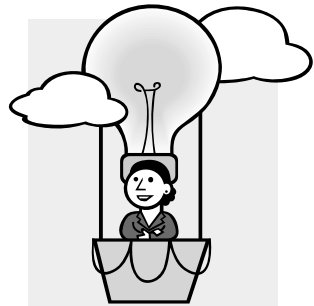
6. Save lives according to one's capacity, releasing animals such as insects, fish, shrimps, etc that will otherwise be killed.

7. To purify past negative actions, perform rituals of repentance such as Confession to the "Allah", "Amitabha", "Amen" or any other purification methods.

8. Seek protection from the enlightened ones, their teachings and their helpers - Triple Gem.

9. Recite the compassion mantra "OM MANI PADME HUM" or "ALLAH" or "AMITABHA" or "AMEN" etc. as much as possible.

10. Rejoice in the virtues of oneself, others and the enlightened beings.



GRAND PUJA OF HEALING IN MALAYSIA

THE BUDDHIST CHANNEL - 22nd November, 2004

Petaling Jaya, Malaysia - It is in the Mahayana that the Medicine Buddha first appeared, and veneration of this Lord of Healing became one of the most popular and widespread devotional groups.

He was worshipped as the dispenser of spiritual medicine that could cure spiritual, psychological and physical disease. Among the 12 vows the Medicine Buddha has taken is that of healing just by the invocation of his name or the thought of him.



From November 25-28th, 2004, the largest gathering of devotees to participate in this year's Grand Puja of Healing for the year will be held at the Chempaka Buddhist Lodge here in Petaling Jaya. The organiser of the puja, the United Karma Kagyu Federation (UKKF), the newest (and only Tibetan group) associate member of the Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA) says that the puja will be a grand occasion as it will

not only be celebrated in one location, but will also embark on a nationwide road show.

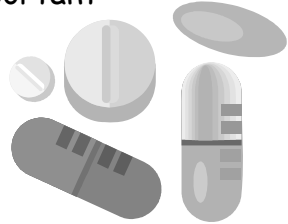
"It is the grandest puja of healing ever organized in recent times, and we intend to let as many devotees as possible to participate in generating good merits. That is why the nationwide road show is organized in conjunction with the main event," says UKKF President, John Fam.

The V.V 9th Thrangu Rinpoche has said that a mantra is essentially an elaboration on the deity's name, and that any mantra is essentially the shortest possible form of the sadhana.

The Mantra of Medicine Buddha is: Tayatha Om Bekanze Bekanze Maha Bekanze Raza Samudgate Soha. Chanting of this Mantra and visualising the Medicine Buddha with devotion, faith and confidence has indeed proven to bring benefits and relieve sufferings to sentient beings.

BUT THIS BUDDHA IS NOT WORSHIPPED SIMPLY FOR HIS HEALING POWERS ALONE; HE IS THE FORM OF THE BUDDHA NATURE THAT WE ASPIRE TO REALISE IN OURSELVES. THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION ON THE MEDICINE BUDDHA, ONE CAN GENERATE ENORMOUS HEALING POWERS FOR OURSELVES AND FOR THE HEALING OF OTHERS.

Perhaps nothing better illustrates the union of religion and medicine in Buddhism than the fact that the greatest of Buddhist philosopher saints were also great physicians who wrote important medical works. According to Tibetans, all medical knowledge has a sacred origin and is ascribed to the wisdom of the Buddhas.



As Red Amitabha Buddha is the Buddha of the Western Pure Land, the Blue Lapis Lazuli Medicine Buddha is often considered the Buddha of the Eastern Pure Land. He is also said to have revealed the teachings embodied in the sacred texts known as the Five Medical Tantras. The whole of Buddhist medicine is said to have derived from this sacred scripture.

IN THIS TANTRA IT IS STATED THAT THE UTMOST POWERS OF HEALING LIE WITHIN OURSELVES AND AN ORDINARY PERSON HAS THE CAPACITY FOR EXTRAORDINARY HEALING.

This can only be gained by recognizing the suffering of others as our own, by suffering as they are suffering, by feeling as one with others. In this aspect, the reciting and visualization of Medicine

Buddha can definitely help in unveiling the compassionate nature of our primordial mind.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF MEDICINE BUDDHA HEALING PRACTICE IS THEREFORE, TO HAVE STRONG SELFLESS COMPASSION FOR OTHERS AND TO HAVE FERVENT TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE HEALING POWERS OF THE MEDICINE BUDDHA.

There will be many opportunities for sponsors to participate in the puja. In this Saha world of the degenerate times, if one is unable to practise, one can also generate and accumulate inconceivable merits by making offerings and creating conducive events to support the spread of the Buddhadharma.

The merits and benefits of sponsoring and supporting a Buddhadharma event is indeed immeasurable. Some of the worldly benefits are

- 1) Peace and prosperity in the country
- 2) Removing all obstacles
- 3) **Prevent sicknesses and diseases**
- 4) Success in all undertakings
- 5) Improving luck and fortune
- 6) Prevent untimely death
- 7) Planting the seed of enlightenment
- 8) Increase in Wisdom.

BUDDHIST HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN MALAYSIA



Sri Jayanthi Free Clinic (Setapak, KL)

- Tel : 016 291 8992

Amata Free Medical & Diabetic Centre (Penang)

- Medical and dental clinic

- Physiotherapy

- Tel: 04-2825944

Penang & Wellesley Buddhist Free Clinic

- Including Acupuncture Service

- Tel : 04-226 2690, 04-828 3318

Metta Free Clinic (Penang)

-Tel: 04-2291205

Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic (Malacca)

- Tel: 06-281 0818, 06-281 2796

Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic (Klang)

- Tel : 03-5161 2048

Buddhist Tzu Chi Dialysis Centre

- Jitra - Tel: 04-917 3604, 04-917 860
- Butterworth - Tel: 04-323 1013, 04-324 1013
- Penang - Tel: 04-227 1013, 04-229 7213

Sau Seng Lum Dialysis Centre (Petaling Jaya, KL)

- Tel : 03-77827546, 03- 77824092

Metta Home

- Old Folks Home

- Setapak - Tel : 03-4022 0845, 019-3375 387
- Ampang -Tel : 03-491 4578

Maha Karuna Compassionate Home (Cheras, KL)

- Home for the medically ill

- Tel : 03-91329629

Buddhist Old Folks' Home (Kajang, Selangor)

-Tel: 03-837 8063

Ti-Ratana Orphanage (Salak South, KL)

- Tel: 03-7 82 3888, 016-223 7581.

Penang Pure Lotus Hospice of Compassion

Tel : 04-229 5481

Buddhist Tzu Chi Home Palliative Care (Penang)

Tel : 04-227 1013, 04-229 7213, 012-493 7013

012-410 7013, 012-421 7013

Buddhist Gem Fellowship
Counselling Service (Petaling Jaya, KL)
- Tel : 03-7954 8750 / 03-79548753

Mitra Line Counselling Service
• Penang - Tel: 04-643 7833
• KL - Tel : 03-783 6399

Pelita Counselling Centre (Ipoh)
- Tel: 05-282 7662

Malaysian Buddhist Co-operative Society Limited
- Proper Funeral Service
- Health Food Trading
- Tel : 03-7875 2808

Yayasan Kebajikan Hong Ying
- Shelter Home
Tel: 03-4023 2350/ 03-4023 8713



He who serves the sick serves the Buddha!

DHARMA TALKS ON BUDDHISM & STRESS



I have discovered that the last place/person that people with mental health problems would go to is a Psychiatrist in a hospital. This is because of the stigma associated with seeing a psychiatrist, "If you consult a psychiatrist, you must be MAD!" I have also noticed that people with mental health problems frequently like to go to temples for blessings and spiritual counselling. In view of that, I have made the effort to bring mental health services to temples instead of expecting people to come to hospitals for consultation. In augmenting mental health services at the temple, I have initiated a series of Dharma talks on dealing with STRESS from a Buddhist perspective.

This is held at the Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple in Sentul with the support from Venerable B. Saranankara Thero. Those people who requires follow-up after the talks will be directed to me in the Sri Jayanthi Free Clinic which is also in the temple. I will then refer them to the Psychiatric & Mental Health services in Hospital Kuala Lumpur where I'm working, if the condition is serious and requires more medical intervention. The following are the topics that I cover in the series of talks:

1. The Art of Transforming Anger
2. A Buddhist Reflect on Change
3. The Joy of Contentment
4. How to Conquer Fear
5. The Healing Power of Vitamin C - Compassion
6. Mind is the Chief, Mind is the Master
7. Meditation as a Therapy
8. Dealing with Guilt
9. It's Bad, Don't be Mad - Embracing Pain
10. Living in the Present Moment
11. Deep Compassionate Listening
12. Total Health Through Dharma

Anyone who is interested to organise such talks in their Buddhist centres may contact me at my email address found at the front of this book.



THE FIRST BUDDHIST HOSPITAL



In spite of the fact that the study and practice of medicine and surgical science has advanced to a great extent by the Buddha's time, hardly any attention was paid to nursing or caring for the sick. Putigatta Tissa Thera was a monk who was stricken by a skin disease which spread, covering his whole body with a mass of ulcerating matter. Lying unattended by the fellow monks, his condition worsened. The Buddha went to the stricken monk who was now dangerously ill, bathed him in warm water with the help of Ananda Thera and cleaned his robes. Having made him comfortable, the Buddha expounded the Teaching to him, explaining the true nature of the

human body. Enlightened by the discourse, the Thera became an Arahant. The Buddha then addressed the other monks on the ennobling task of caring for the sick.

Accepting the compassionate exhortation of the Master and following His noble example, the laity started to build wards for sick monks in all large monasteries. Later, king Dhammasoka was to build hospitals not only for the public but also for sick animals. Hence, the honour for the establishment of the first hospitals should be given to the Buddhists.





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- **DHARMA THERAPY** - Cases of Healing through Vipassana by *Mahasi Sayadaw.*
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By the power of the MERITS
accrued from the writing & compilation
of this book, may my MOTHER'S breast
cancer never relapse and my FATHER'S
diabetes mellitus & hypercholesterolemia
be under control!